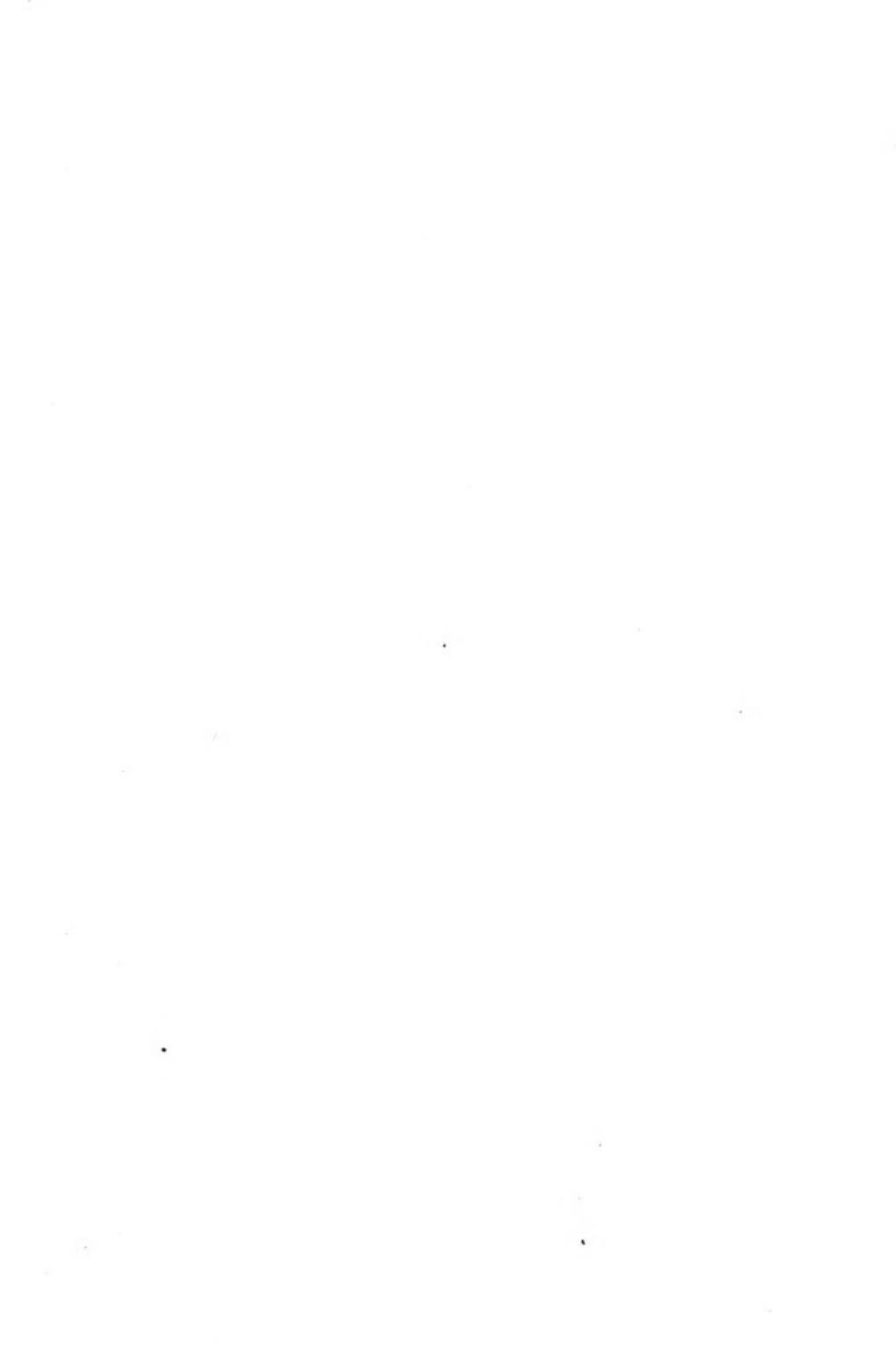


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An essay on the existence o:
a supreme creator possessed



AN
ESSAY
ON THE
EXISTENCE
OF A
SUPREME CREATOR,
&c.

TO WHICH MR. BURNETT's FIRST PRIZE, OF £1000, WAS
ADJUDGED, AT ABERDEEN, ON THE 4TH
DAY OF AUGUST, 1815.



Burgis No. 3. M

AN

ESSAY

ON THE

EXISTENCE

OF A

Supreme Creator,

POSSESSED OF

INFINITE POWER, WISDOM, AND GOODNESS;

CONTAINING ALSO

THE REFUTATION,

FROM

REASON AND REVELATION,

OF THE OBJECTIONS URGED AGAINST

HIS WISDOM AND GOODNESS;

AND DEDUCING,

FROM THE WHOLE SUBJECT,

THE MOST IMPORTANT PRACTICAL INFERENCES.

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ABERDEEN, &c. &c.

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BOOK II.

CHAPTER X.

Of the real Distribution of Good and Evil.

To any attentive observer of human life, and of human sentiment, it must be evident that *pain*, and *suffering*, make a much stronger impression on the mind, and are much longer remembered, than enjoyment, and *positive* pleasure. This circumstance tends to evince the necessity of subjecting our species to inconvenience, and temporary distress, as spurs to action, adapted to our present condition and circumstances. That series of calm and regular enjoyment, which pervades life, and

renders it so desirable, passes unobserved, and is so inherent in the very tenor of our existence, that we seldom, or never, allow it any degree of estimation, till it is interrupted by unexpected disease, or affliction. This very consideration, however, illustrates its extensive reality, and its high importance.

In fact, one great cause of the disappointment and vexation of mankind, is, that they form, to themselves, imaginary and delusive notions of exquisite sensual felicity. The senses are incapable of furnishing any enjoyment, either *exquisite*, or *durable*. The opulent, and the vain, are continually running in quest of new pleasures, and are not aware that *new pleasure* is placed beyond their reach, in the line in which they pursue it. They must invariably meet with the same insipid objects again and again presented. If they had any conception of *real happiness*, they would find it, in the regular gratification

cation of the best faculties of their nature, and be convinced that to invest indulgences, merely sensual, with the delusive colours of imagination, is only to prepare, for themselves, a greater portion of disappointment, and disgust. The inferiour animals are happy in the *regular* exercise of the faculties which nature has given them. It were to be wished that those, who place their felicity in gratifications merely animal, would imitate this *animal economy*. A little attention will convince us that the ordinary enjoyments greatly overbalance the ordinary miseries of life. For,

1st; We know nothing of past ages, but from history; and history records only the transactions of states and nations, influenced by their rulers. These, actuated by ambition, by revenge, by sordid interest, and the insatiable thirst of adding conquest to conquest, and province to province, and of exercising despotic power,

have, by the arts of persuasion, and the various delusions by which human passions are inflamed, often engaged their subjects, or their adherents, in their quarrels, and roused them to rush on their fellows of the human race, with all the fury of blinded prejudice, or of misguided principle. They have, thus, deluged the earth with blood, and filled the habitations of men with the heart-freezing forms of desolation. History is almost one continued exhibition of the follies and crimes of mankind, diversified with such displays of courage, skill, and generosity, as peculiar circumstances are calculated to call into action. But, it exhibits no record of the ordinary course of human affairs, which, after all, is that which must represent, to us, the faithful picture of the lot of man. If it attempted to delineate this uniform scene, however valuable the record would be to the philosopher, it would not interest the feelings, or attract the attention, of mankind,

of

of which the former can be roused, and the latter fixed, only by those exhibitions which are uncommon, and splendid.

Horrible, however, as the course of history is, fortunately for our species, the principal part of its happiness, its real and substantial *good*, lies beyond her sphere. The craft, the oppression, and the cruelty of the tyrants, and deceivers of the world, reach not the great mass of the human race, who, in the retired recesses of humble life, continue their ordinary pursuits, and enjoy their unenvied, and, therefore, secure comforts. These even the worst of times have never overturned, and much less annihilated ; and a great proportion of human felicity has always escaped the malignity and the folly of man !

2dly ; Atrocious crimes enter not into the ordinary detail of human life. The horror, which they excite, as has been, al-

ready, observed, evinces their infrequency. They are the result of dispositions *peculiarly* depraved, unsubdued by proper culture, and brought into action by certain unusual combinations of circumstances. In some cases, they seem more to be ascribed to a species of mental derangement, than to what may be properly denominated *moral turpitude*. In fact, if such crimes were common, society could not subsist. On the other hand, very eminent displays of virtue are equally unusual, and, on this account, excite our highest admiration. But, such displays, however perfective of human nature, and incumbent on every human being, placed in a situation requiring, or encouraging, them, are not necessary for the preservation, and ordinary comfort of society. That general regularity of conduct, which constitutes the detail of life, and which, considering the general neglect of *moral* education, has often surprised me, is the chief tie by which the community is held together.

together. But, like the ordinary means of subsistence, or the natural productions which are daily offered to our view, it excites no wonder, or esteem, merely because it is common.

Besides, when we consider the deep ignorance in which so many of the human race are plunged; the errors which have been transmitted from generation to generation; the prejudices which adhere even to those whose improvement has not been entirely neglected; the defects of education, both *public*, and *private*; the false maxims, which, without dispute, or inquiry, are established in the world; the power of example, of habit, and of temptation; the manner in which the desires and passions are imperceptibly excited, and strengthened, so that they bid defiance to the control of reason; the first motives to the most abominable deeds—motives, in themselves, sometimes laudable, and often innocent; if we consider

all this, we shall be led to acknowledge that the greater part of men sin more from *imprudence*, and *error*, than from *deliberate* and *desperate wickedness*, and that even crimes, which appear to us invested with the most detestable colours, may, to him, who *looketh on the heart*, and knoweth all its springs, and modifications, appear more deserving of compassion, than of interminable, unmitigated punishment. These reflections have, sometimes, occurred to me, on the recital of some of the most atrocious crimes by which our nature is degraded. Their motives can hardly be conceived by us who have so little knowledge of the internal state of the human frame. *The Lord seeth not as man seeth ; for, man looketh on the outward appearance, but, the Lord looketh on the heart.** Though human judgments must be pronounced according to the evidence produced ; yet, that evidence cannot, in
many

* 1 Sam. xvi. 7.

many instances, exhibit the *exact* moral complexion of the action which is tried. Men must, therefore, judge of the same action differently from *Him*, who is *omniscient*, and to whom certain deeds, characterized by the blackest features of external guilt, may appear less criminal, than even some of those faults, which, in human estimation, are hardly deserving censure.

Whoever reflects on these points, will be the less surprised that Scripture, with that candour which is the test of truth, records even the crimes of those whose piety it celebrates, nor will suffer himself to lose all respect for the characters of *David*, or *Peter*, on account of the crimes into which they were betrayed. Besides, many have compensated their faults, of which they sincerely repented, by virtuous deeds, peculiar only to energetic minds, impressed with a general love of virtue. Their crimes subjected them to

the

the horrors of remorse, which, to such characters, must be torture in the extreme. Their new and better habits procured them the consolations which are necessarily annexed to such a renovation. One action of remarkable turpitude is sufficient to stigmatize a character. Many virtuous efforts will not efface the stain, in the opinion of mankind !

3dly ; That the general structure and contrivance of nature are wise, and benevolent, cannot be questioned. A regular balance and counteraction of opposite agents is necessary for the preservation and welfare of the whole system. When any disorder occasionally happens, which results from the excess of operation on one side, certain struggles and convulsions must ensue, and be productive of temporary inconvenience, and *evil*, till the proper balance be restored, and the primeval harmony re-established. Hence, many things, which, to superficial observers, appear

pear defective and vicious, are, after more accurate examination, discovered to be useful, regular, and wisely adjusted. The immense ocean, for example, so long deemed useless, and barren, is a vast cistern, whose waters, exhaled by the sun-beams, fall, in rains, to fertilize the earth. The vast deep also teems with inhabitants subservient to human nourishment ; and, although in the rudest periods of society, it appeared an unsurmountable obstacle to human intercourse, becomes, when the art of navigation is cultivated, the grand mean of communication between mankind, and of commerce, by which they are enriched, civilized, and improved. The huge ranges of mountains, which traverse many parts of the globe, and were long inaccessible to man, produce trees and plants, which require elevated situation, and furnish springs and rivers for watering the earth, and facilitating the communication between sea-coasts, and the more remote and higher

higher parts of countries. Tempests are occasioned by the exhalations from the sea, or the marshy parts of the land, by their impregnating the clouds with sulphureous vapours, by the motion of these through the air, by the cooler regions of the atmosphere rushing into the heated spaces with great violence, and by other local and adventitious causes. Although these temporary disorders, and commotions of the elements produce partial calamities, such as shipwrecks, devastations of the produce of the earth, and direful accidents of different kinds ; yet, these extraordinary tumults and convulsions of nature are, on the whole, salutary, and necessary for the purification of the atmosphere, for the restoration of the interrupted balance of the elements, and for the preservation and health of the animals which the earth contains, particularly of the human species. Large forests, into which the foot of man cannot penetrate, and which his axe cannot, consequently,

quently, reach, afford habitations to various kinds of animals, who enjoy their existence; and recent observation has proved that the strong and towering vegetation of these hosts of trees is greatly subservient to the purification of our aerial fluid.* In fine, the more all the various parts of nature have been scrutinized, and understood, the more they have been found to be adapted to wise and beneficent ends, and we may safely presume that this will be the invariable result of increasing and accumulated observation.

That the general constitution of man's corporeal frame is calculated for health, and enjoyment, cannot be doubted. Though diseases are inseparable from this constitution, yet, these are encroachments on its natural state, and deviations
from

* See Hutcheson's System of Moral Philosophy, vol. i.
p. 180. 4to.

from its ordinary progress. In a thousand instances; indeed, in every instance where a cure has been obtained, they are strong warnings against something pernicious to the corporal system, and, consequently, to be carefully avoided in future. In fact, when we consider the trials to which mankind, in general, expose their health, the wonder is, not that it is so frequently injured, but that it resists the violent shocks which it has to endure: When we reflect on the ignorance and precipitancy of childhood, the rashness and debauchery of youth, the deliberate and habitual indulgences of advanced life, and the confirmed, because incorrigible, folly of old age, we behold one continued resistance of divine providence to man's assaults on his own corporal comfort, and a preservation to which he is entitled, neither by his *prudence*, nor by his *gratitude*. In the advanced periods of society, when luxury prevails to a high degree, even the ordinary habits of life are marked.

marked by an intemperance in the use of food, and liquors, which, by being rendered, in some measure, necessary to that state which is held to be comfortable, are more easily admitted to undermine the constitution. Let any person, even of reputed temperance, consider what a variety of heterogeneous substances he consigns to his stomach, at any ordinary entertainment, and he will be astonished at its digestive powers, and cease to be surprised at his occasional distempers. The instances of longevity, which the bills of mortality afford, greatly surpass every legitimate expectation suggested by an impartial view of human intemperance and excess, even in their mildest forms. Yet, men complain of the prevalence of diseases, and madly charge their Creator with *evils* which they draw upon themselves, but he, in his mercy, mitigates and removes! Even in order to cure diseases, originating in human folly, and extravagance, extremes, which tend rather

ther to aggravate them, are often embraced. Thus, when certain modes of life are become *habitual*, and have assumed the character of a *second nature*, instead of tempering and moderating these, so as to remove what may justly be called *excess*, the whole antecedent train of living is abandoned, and a degree of abstinence, which early habit only can render salutary, or even tolerable, is substituted in its place. The effect often is to precipitate that dissolution which it is intended to delay. In this, as in a thousand other cases, the proverb is perfectly applicable ;—

*“Dum vitant stulti vitia, in contraria currunt.”**

Still, whether in the production of diseases, or in foolish attempts to remove them, human arrogance and discontent impute pains and disappointments to the administration of the Author of *every good and perfect gift.*†

4thly;

* “Fools, shunning vice, are ever in extremes.”—Hor. Serm. l. i. ii. 24. † James i. 17.

4thly; It will, now, be proper to bestow some attention on that common complaint, that the distribution of *good* and *evil* is *unequal* and *promiscuous*; that *virtue* is, in this scene of things, depressed and insulted; and *vice* exalted and honoured. On more minute and accurate inquiry, we shall find that, with regard to this point also, much exaggeration prevails, and that incorrect views, and ignorance of the real state of the *moral system*, produce rash and precipitate judgments.

That there is not, in this world, an exact retribution; or that *virtue*, or real *excellence* of any kind, receives not its complete reward; or *vice*, or *mental insignificance*, incurs not its just condemnation, and disregard, is undoubted. In fact, to suppose, in the present state of things, a complete scheme of retribution, would set aside all idea of a state of *probation* and *trial*. For, while *trial* exists, the reward cannot be obtained, nor the punishment be incurred.

But, after all, on inquiry, it will be found that there exists, even here, more of *retribution*, than is commonly supposed, and such as is amply sufficient to vindicate the present administration of Providence, and to lead us to anticipate a complete display of *justice*, and *goodness*, in a succeeding scene.

Let it be observed, then, that human characters are mixed; that, with great *virtues*, considerable *vices* are often joined; and that remarkable weaknesses often accompany illustrious mental energies.

“ *Vitiis nemo sine nascitur, optimus ille est
Qui minimis urgetur.*”*

Will it be maintained, by those who complain of the *unequal* distribution of prosperity,

* Hor. S. l. i. iii. 68—69.

“ For we have all our vices; and the best

“ Is he, who with the fewest is opprest.”—FRANCIS.

There is none righteous; no, not one.—Rom. iii. 10.

prosperity, and adversity, that the virtues, or talents, which a character exhibits, are not to meet with their peculiar rewards, or that the vices and follies, which stain, or degrade it, are not to incur their proper punishments, or inconveniences? Now, if it really happen that the course of life exhibits this result, on the whole; that a character, which is *mixed*, as the generality of human characters are, reaps the benefit of its *good*, and suffers the detriment arising from its *bad*, qualities, will it be alleged that this is a proof of the want of *distributive* justice, in the great ruler of the universe, and not rather the most striking display of nice, exact, and admirable discrimination, and moral government? This is, however, the case: and, as Dr. Smith has, in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*,* illustrated this subject, in a concise, and striking manner, I shall

B 2

quote

* Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, vol. i. p. p. 415—
420, and sequen.

quote his own words; and subjoin, to these, some observations of my own.

“ If,” says he, “ we consider the general rules by which external prosperity and adversity are commonly distributed in this life, we shall find that, notwithstanding the disorder in which all things appear to be in this world, yet, even here, every virtue meets with its proper reward, with the recompense which is most fit to encourage and promote it; and this too so surely, that it requires a very extraordinary concurrence of circumstances entirely to disappoint it. What is the reward most proper for encouraging industry, prudence, and circumspection? Success in every sort of business. And is it possible that, in the whole of life, these virtues, should fail of attaining it? Wealth, and external honours, are their proper recompense, and the recompense which they can seldom fail of acquiring.

“ What

“ What reward is most proper for promoting the practice of truth, justice, and humanity ? The confidence, the esteem, and love of those we live with. Humanity does not desire to be great, but to be beloved. It is not in being rich that truth and justice would rejoice, but in being trusted, and believed—repenses which these virtues must almost always acquire.” What is the proper punishment of negligence, and indolence ? Disorder in one’s affairs, and consequent poverty. What the punishment of fraud, injustice, and cruelty ? What, but distrust, suspicion, contempt, detestation ? Do not these vices commonly incur these retributions ?

It frequently happens that a character, on the whole, *good*, is deformed by certain *vices*; and, on the other hand, a vicious character may possess certain *good qualities*, and *useful talents*. Thus, a man of probity may be negligent in the manage-

ment of his affairs, be too prone to excesses of sociality, or too fond of applause. His *probity* will procure him confidence, and attachment. His *negligence* will, nevertheless, involve him in domestic embarrassment. His *occasional excess* will subject him both to indisposition, and to disrespect. His *vanity* will render him an object of ridicule. Thus also, a cunning, selfish person may be just in his dealings, when strict law points out, and defines, his exact course; and display *skill*, *correctness*, and *dispatch*, in *business*. His *selfishness*, and *cunning*, will be generally known, and hated; and any misfortune, that befalls him, will, instead of being pitied, become matter of general satisfaction. He will, yet, be trusted in matters of *strict justice*, and his skill and dexterity in business will procure him employment.

On the other hand, a man of great talents, and of superior knowledge, may
vote

vote himself to intemperance, despise the common decencies of life, and outrage all the best feelings of the virtuous heart. Of this character many instances might be produced. Ought a person of this stamp to be placed in any respectable station, or have it in his power to inflict the deepest wounds on the highest interests of mankind? Ought he not rather to be consigned to contempt, and ignominy, proportioned to the superiority of his abilities, which aggravate his guilt, by the aggravation of their perversion! Such instances frequently happen.

On these principles, we may account for appearances which frequently excite our astonishment. We observe persons universally hated, or despised, raised to situations which we would allot to better men, and wealth possessed by those whom we deem utterly unworthy of it. But, we reflect not that *good men* frequently want either those abilities, or that activity

which are necessary in the management of *public*, or *private* business, and sometimes belong to those of the opposite description; that the former rely too much on their character for probity, and the latter, aware that they cannot trust to this, exert themselves in ways which are useful; and that the advantages which these last enjoy, and the others lose, are not allotted to their *morality*, but to their intellectual, or corporal energies. Besides, *bad men* are often very assiduous in adapting themselves to circumstances, times, and characters, in courting the favour of all who can serve them, in availing themselves of their foibles, in flattering their prejudices, and in soothing their passions. On the other hand, even legitimate compliances with human *infirmit*y are often neglected by the *virtuous*, who, from a species of *pride*, apparently honourable, disdain to obtain any advantage which is not the acknowledged and just reward of *merit*. Hence, many favours,

and

and benefits, which frank, unbending integrity despises, and rejects, fall to the lot of dexterous meanness. *Verily, both have their reward.** The generous and elevated mind exults in its conscious dignity, and in the general esteem. The mean, contemptible soul hugs itself on the portion of good things which it has purloined, and sneaks, through life—enriched—titled—and—despised!

Let it also be considered that when a virtuous man has suffered any great detriment by his *imprudence*, he is generally pitied, and frequently relieved. On the contrary, when all the art and dexterity of a *rogue* have not been able to avert calamity, not only is commiseration withheld from him, but, joy is manifested at his distress, which is often aggravated by the general desire of its continuance.

I return

* Matt. vi. 12.

I return to Dr. Smith.—“ By some “ very extraordinary and unlucky circum- “ stance,” he adds, “ a good man may “ come to be suspected of a crime of “ which he was altogether incapable, and, “ upon that account, be most unjustly “ exposed, for the remaining part of his “ life, to the horror and aversion of man- “ kind. By an accident of this kind he “ may be said to lose his all, notwith- “ standing his integrity and justice; in “ the same manner as a cautious man, “ notwithstanding his utmost circumspec- “ tion, may be ruined by an earthquake, “ or an inundation. Accidents of the “ first kind, however, are still more rare, “ and still more contrary to the common “ course of things, than those of the se- “ cond; and it still remains true that the “ practice of truth, justice, and humanity, “ is a certain, and almost infallible method “ of acquiring what those virtues chiefly “ aim at, the confidence and love of those “ we live with. A person may be very
“ easily

“ easily misrepresented with regard to a
“ particular action; but, it is scarce pos-
“ sible that he should be so with regard to
“ the general tenor of his conduct. An
“ innocent man may be believed to have
“ done wrong; this, however, will rarely
“ happen. On the contrary, the esta-
“ blished opinion of the innocence of his
“ manners will often lead us to absolve
“ him when he has really been in the
“ fault, notwithstanding very strong pre-
“ sumptions. A knave, in the same man-
“ ner, may escape censure, or even meet
“ with applause, for a particular knavery,
“ in which his conduct is not understood.
“ But, no man was ever habitually such,
“ without being almost universally known
“ to be so, and without being even fre-
“ quently suspected of guilt, when he
“ was, in reality, perfectly innocent. And
“ so far as vice, and virtue, can be either
“ punished or rewarded by the sentiments
“ and opinions of mankind, they both, ac-
“ cording to the common course of things,
“ meet

“ meet even here with something more
“ than exact and impartial justice.

“ But, though the general rules by
“ which prosperity and adversity are com-
“ monly distributed, when considered in
“ this cool and philosophical light, appear
“ to be perfectly suited to the situation of
“ mankind in this life, yet, they are by no
“ means suited to some of our natural
“ sentiments. Our natural love and ad-
“ miration for some virtues is such, that
“ we should wish to bestow on them all
“ sorts of honours and rewards, even those
“ which we must acknowledge to be the
“ proper recompenses of other qualities,
“ with which those virtues are not always
“ accompanied. Our detestation, on the
“ contrary, for some vices is such, that we
“ should desire to heap upon them every
“ sort of disgrace and disaster, those not
“ excepted which are natural conse-
“ quences of very different qualities.
“ Magnanimity, generosity, and justice,
“ command

“ command so high a degree of admiration, that we desire to see them crowned with wealth, and power, and honours of every kind, the natural consequences of prudence, industry, and application ; qualities with which these virtues are not inseparably connected. Fraud, falsehood, brutality, and violence, on the other hand, excite in every human breast such scorn and abhorrence, that our indignation rouses to see them possess those advantages which they may, in some sense, be said to have merited, by the diligence and industry with which they are sometimes attended. The industrious knave cultivates the soil ; the indolent good man leaves it uncultivated. Who ought to reap the harvest ? Who starve, and who live in plenty ? The natural course of things decides it in favour of the knave ; the natural sentiments of mankind in favour of the man of virtue. Man judges that the good qualities of the “ one

"one are greatly over-recompensed by
"those advantages which they tend to
"procure him, and that the omissions of
"the other are by far too severely pu-
"nished by the distress which they na-
"turally bring upon him; and human
"laws, the consequences of human senti-
"ments, forfeit the life, and the estate of
"the industrious and cautious traitor, and
"reward, by extraordinary recompenses,
"the fidelity and public spirit of the im-
"provident, and careless good citizen."

Thus, the Deity, who has enacted general laws, from which certain inconveniences are inseparable, hath, in the tenor of human feelings, established some counterpoise to these inconveniences. He hath endued mankind with the admiration of *virtue*, and the detestation of *vice*, and, in some instances, permitted both, in this promiscuous scene, to exhibit some shadow, and faint representation of that exact retribution which will, hereafter,

after, be displayed. In fact, such is the course of human affairs, that the wicked seldom long enjoy their prosperity, and triumph. What is purchased by crime, perishes by it. Riches, procured by fraud, or by avarice, violence may rob, or luxury may dissipate. Honours and dignities, obtained by sedition, or oppression, sooner, or later, incur contempt, hatred, and vengeance.—

“*Tolluntur in altum,*
“*Ut lapsu graviore ruant.*”*

All education proceeds on the opinion that *knowledge, useful arts, and good principles*, will lead to the comfort and advantage of their possessors. Every father, then, who educates his child, bears testimony to this important truth, that just opinions, becoming sentiments, and right conduct, will not only ensure the esteem and

* Claud. in Ruf. l. i. v. 32, 33.

“*They're rais'd on high to aggravate their fall.*”

and confidence of mankind, but prove the most effectual means of obtaining a comfortable provision in the world, while they qualify those, who exhibit them, for the enjoyment of fortune, when inherited. In reality, a virtuous character, united with knowledge, prudence, and fortitude, will, in the ordinary course of human life, lead to competence, and, frequently, to wealth, and honours. On the other hand, vicious principles, and dissolute conduct, will often dissipate hereditary wealth, and involve hereditary honours in irretrievable disgrace. Nay, they prompt to the perpetration of crimes which are expiated by an ignominious death. It were to be wished that these considerations were deeply impressed on men's minds. The chief temptation to immorality, and vice, is temporal enjoyment, and advantage; and profligate men foolishly imagine that the precepts of religion, and virtue, are suited merely to the schools, and to the early period of life; but, are completely

completely useless *in the world*, and in maturer years. This is their profound wisdom. On their own ground I meet them, and beg that they will examine human affairs a little more accurately than they are disposed to do, or have, hitherto, had the capacity of doing. I appeal even to their own limited experience. They must find that a virtuous and good *life is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come* ;* and that, not only in *church*, but, at the *bar*, in the *senate*, in the *field*, on *change*, in *decent company*—*the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the holy is understanding*.† Foolish and vicious men oppose *practice* to *theory*, and *experience*, to *principle*. I answer them that the *theory of sound morals* is confirmed by *practice*, and that just *principles* are established by *experience*. Nay, what is more; both sound *theory*,

* 1 Tim. iv. 8.

† Prov. ix. 10.

and accurate *principle*, are dictated by the *practice* and *experience* of life ; not those, indeed, of *ruffians*, and *profligates*, but, of the great body of mankind, from age to age.

Nor do the misfortunes of good men terminate always in absolute *temporal evil*. By distress, difficulties, labours, and even transitory ignominy, they are not unfrequently exalted to a higher degree of prosperity and grandeur, than ever they expected to enjoy. When their characters are completely known, mankind often become ashamed of their iniquity, with regard to them, and endeavour to compensate it by extraordinary kindness and remuneration. If they have left the world, before this change of sentiment takes place, their penitent opposers often crown their memory with posthumous honours. Such was the lot of Socrates, and has been the lot of others, of *whom the world was not worthy*.*

Let

* Heb. xi. 38.

Let it be, further, considered that the distribution of *prosperity*, and *adversity*, appears *promiscuous*, and *unequal*, in a great measure, because the real characters of men are not accurately ascertained. All, who are esteemed as *virtuous*, are not so, in the proper sense of the term ; nor are all *vicious*, to whom that degrading epithet is often applied. We know nothing of other men, but from report, or our own experience. *Fame*, or *report*, is, in the words of *Virgil*,

“ *Tam facti pravique tenax, quam nuncia veri.*”*

Friends and flatterers decorate, with honourable distinction, the man whom enemies, and rivals asperse. Different sects, and parties, load their adversaries with reproach, and exalt their adherents to the clouds. Religionists extol those who agree, with them, in certain tenets, or in a certain phraseology, and repro-

* “ Falsehood and truth fame equally records.”

bate such as have adopted different opinions, or a different language.

Nay, individual opinion varies, at different times, in regard to the same character. Opposition of interests, or of sentiments, invests, with the colours of turpitude, the person who has excited resentment, or who has become the object of revenge—Circumstances alter, and the same person co-operates with those whom he had formerly opposed—The stains are removed from his character. The mental sight is purified. He is seen in a new light; and, having been *base*, and *odious*, he becomes *respectable*, *amiable*, and *excellent*. How many instances of this kind have occurred in the course of life!

Strange and contradictory notions are also often entertained of *virtue*, or *vice*. Such instances may be found in Cicero's third Book *De Natura Deorum*. The Romans called every man *virtuous*, who extended

tended their dominions, or augmented the glory of their Republic. Was it any objection against Providence that Fabius buried his son who had attained the consular dignity ? Was Marcellus, in all respects, a better man than Hannibal ? Observe, among ourselves, what contradictory estimates are made of worth, and depravity ! He, who promotes the selfish views of a certain class, or profession, is extolled by all who belong to it, whatever be the means which he employs for this purpose. He, who opposes, and counteracts them, is decried with all the virulence of wounded selfishness. Let any man of sound sense, and of enlarged experience, reflect how often he has heard the man, whom he knew to be a *knav*e, praised beyond all bounds, and the person, of whose integrity he was well assured, loaded with unmerited and ignorant censure ; and he will find abundant reason for rejecting the common opinions of the world, with regard to the true *morality* of characters.

Are these, then, rules for the administration of an infinitely wise and good Governor of the universe?

Nor is there less mistake in regard to the notions of external *good*, and *evil*. Circumstances, that appear, to us, intolerable, may be more easily born by others of different tempers, and habits. The man, accustomed to endure, learns to accommodate himself to the burden. This is a happy dispensation of Providence; and, although this consideration should never diminish our sympathy with distress, it points out a benignity in the divine government which renders even misfortune a mean of diminishing its own afflictive power. This reflection should rather induce us to exert ourselves for the alleviation of calamity, in imitation of the divine example. As a spring, then, the more closely it is rolled together, more strongly resists the compressing force; as a vault is consolidated by the pressure

pressure which it endures; as certain stones are hardened and incrusted by the rain and the wind—so, those, who have been inured to adversity, acquire courage and strength from their repeated struggles, and assume a vigour and firmness unknown to other men, and even to themselves, before their corroborating experience.

We are also deceived by our ideas of *felicity*, which we are too apt to place in external circumstances. For, although these are certainly entitled to due and important consideration; yet, in them, all terrestrial happiness is not justly supposed to consist. We leave, out of the account, the internal agitations, and tortures of wicked men, even in the midst of their affluence, their self-contempt, and the low estimation in which they are conscious that they are held by others, and which they cannot help confessing even in their looks, and general deportment.

We omit the conscious dignity, and internal joys of good men struggling with adversity, and their confidence in that just administration of the world, which promises them a glorious issue.

Even the acknowledged *evils* of human life, whether *natural*, or *moral*, might be still more mitigated than they are, if proper means, for this purpose, were adopted, and vigorously and perseveringly employed. For the alleviation, and, in some cases, for the entire *removal* of *natural evils*, human ingenuity and industry might accomplish much. If the experience of past ages were carefully recorded, and particular attention paid to the occurrences of our own times, a system of precaution, or cure, comprehensively efficacious, might be established. We see that some diseases, whose ravages were formerly tremendous, have been nearly extirpated. Much yet remains to be done for the alleviation of human misery,

sery, in various ways; nor is it possible to conjecture what happy results may be produced by wisdom and perseverance, in the discovery and application of decided remedies.

It is a certain fact that the *natural* evils, to which man is exposed, are prodigiously increased by his *moral* corruption; nay, in a hundred instances, the former are the consequences, and the punishments, of the latter. Diminish this last, and you repel a very great proportion of *natural* misery. Correct corruption entirely, if this were possible, and you, in some respects, restore Eden to the earth. At any rate, much might be done for the reformation of our species, by good laws, by improvements in government, by the diffusion of salutary education, and, above all, by the encouragement and extension of sound, pure, and genuine Christianity.

But,

But, how do matters stand in these respects? Seldom is the general interest regarded; nay, what is evidently and directly conducive to it is, often, opposed with obstinacy, and art. The selfish views of individuals, or of a party, are violently maintained, in defiance of every sound principle of public utility; and *corruption* is *secretly* supported on the grounds *publicly* alleged by *Demetrius*, the silver-smith at Ephesus.* If men will not correct the abuses which it is in their power to remove, they must submit to their consequences; and let it be considered that *moral* causes produce, in fit cases, their effects as certainly, and invariably, as *physical* causes produce theirs. But, while men *hypocritically* deny corruptions to exist, in order to avoid the sacrifices which the reformation of them requires, let them not *impiously* charge divine Providence with the consequences which they

* Acts xiv. 21. and sequen.

they have drawn, and rivet, on themselves.

But, the chief reason why so many objections are urged against the *wisdom*, and *goodness* of God, in the government of the world, is, that the present scene is considered in an insulated and detached point of view, and not regarded as a state of probation preparatory to another of perfect retribution. Would men reflect that another state, in which every virtue will receive its full reward, and every vice, its appropriate punishment, and not only the justice, but the clemency and benignity of the Deity will be most illustriously displayed, is to succeed the present, we should not merely suspend our judgment, till more ample knowledge were obtained, but confess that the *evils*, which we either behold, or endure, may prove conducive to the glorious consummation of the general plan. For, if difficulties, hardships, and endurance, are, as will be shewn more particularly

particularly in the succeeding chapter, necessary for the exercise and perfection of some of the highest virtues of human nature, and, consequently, for the attainment of its highest felicity, it is clear that *the light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.** Enough has, I trust, been said to place, beyond contradiction, that the real distribution of *good*, and *evil*, in this world, is often egregiously misunderstood, and grossly misrepresented.

* 2 Cor. iv. 17.

CHAPTER XI.

Of the Uses to which Evil, both natural and moral, is rendered subservient by Providence.

IT has been, already, shewn, that *evil* could not be excluded from any system of creation whatever ; that the *permission* of *moral evil* is inseparable from the exercise of *free agency* ; and that, with regard, whether to *natural*, or to *moral evil*, much misconception and misrepresentation exist. Let us, now, view the benefits to which this unavoidable constitution of things is rendered subservient, and observe the Deity

Deity extracting, from it, the greatest possible good.

1st; By the permission of *moral* depravity, the different dispositions and characters of men are unfolded; and the knowledge of these is absolutely necessary to the proper regulation of conduct. Much of our happiness depends on the right choice of associates, friends, or favourites. It is requisite not only to cultivate *virtue*, but also to avoid the contagion of *vice*. But, this double obligation could never be fulfilled, nor that selection be made, unless both *virtue* and *vice* were allowed freely to exhibit their respective complexions. Without this discrimination of characters, we should often remain in painful uncertainty in regard to our conduct towards others, and be secretly harrassed by the apprehension, that, assigning to *virtue* the character of *vice*, and that of *vice*, to *virtue*, we might be guilty either of *injury*, or of *imprudence*. Into what

what errors are we often led by hypocrisy, or misrepresentation, notwithstanding the freedom of action which is permitted? Our situation would, in this respect, be much worse, if this freedom were suppressed. In fact, none could have any character, at all. Thus, our opinions, and actions, in our social intercourse, would stand on no foundation, and social and civil life would not be directed by reason, but be subject to the fortuitous course of events. This is much less the case, when human dispositions are freely evinced by conduct.

2dly; The detestable figure of *vice* inflames us more and more with the love of the amiable and celestial form of *virtue*. When these are displayed in striking contrast, the beauty, the dignity, and unsullied excellence of the one raise admiration, and inspire delight and love; and the baseness, the deformity, and turpitude of the other fill us with disgust, and abhorrence.

horrence. How much these opposite sentiments tend to the reprobation of *moral* depravity, and to the encouragement of *moral* excellence, is sufficiently evident. Let any person reflect what increase the tenderness of affection for a meritorious and amiable character derives from the view of that sordid selfishness, and sneaking art which life so frequently betrays, and he will acknowledge that human baseness is not devoid of its use, while it, thus, tends to inspire and confirm our respect and reverence for all that adorns and dignifies our nature. How much are the ties of friendship strengthened and endeared by the same considerations ; by the view of those contemptible passions which so often degrade our species. Although identity of interests, or of criminal pursuits, is often a bond of association, and, for a time, produces mutual co-operation and assistance ; yet, no real friendship, which is a generous, disinterested union of affection, can exist,

exist, without mutual *esteem*, and no *esteem* can exist without the persuasion of the virtue of its object. Such virtuous union, as friendship implies, is always consolidated and ensured by the contrasted spectacle of qualities incompatible with it. The strong antipathy of *right* to *wrong* draws closer and closer the bonds subsisting among all who are under this *holy* impression, and places them, in array, against the enemies of religion, virtue, and mankind !

3dly ; By *moral evil* tainting the conduct of one part of our species, opportunities are afforded, to others, of exercising the noblest virtues. *Injury inflicted* gives occasion to display *forgiveness* and *forgiveness* ; *provocation* calls forth *patience* and *meekness* ; *insult* affords cause for *self-command*, and *composure of temper* ; *calumny* challenges the *firmness of integrity* ; *malice* prompts the steady and unruffled defence of *conscious worth*. If, from *moral evil*, pro-

ceed dissensions, virulent strifes, hatreds, wars, bloodshed, and devastation, these either generate or confirm gentleness, candour, bravery, fortitude, love of country, and magnanimity. We cannot pretend to determine what opportunities of cultivating and exercising our best affections might have been afforded in a state of innocence. But, we certainly know that, in the present state of human nature, many of the most important and exalted offices of life are dictated by the corruption and wickedness of mankind.

4thly; From *natural evil* also many beneficial effects result. It is, however, to be observed that this is often the consequence of *moral evil*, and ensues, as its punishment. *Diseases, pains, want, and ruin, anguish of spirit, and death itself*, are, not unfrequently, the effects of *vice*, and tend, in some measure, to arrest its progress. *Diseases and pains*, proceeding from *intemperance*, suggest the necessity of

of *sobriety*, and of *abstinence* from what is pernicious to the constitution. How many, and important precautions, and remedies, are dictated by distemper, and bodily distress! *Remorse of conscience* conveys a powerful admonition to relinquish the vices and crimes which produce it. The *punishments inflicted on criminals*, and the *natural calamities*, which they suffer, convey awful warnings against a course of wickedness. The benefits, thence resulting to civil society, are sufficiently obvious.

Even those *evils*, which proceed from no human fault, are not destitute of utility. They admonish us, in many instances, of the approach of greater mischief, and stimulate us to anticipate and repel it. We are surrounded by a variety of objects, which prove salutary, or noxious, according to the use and application of them. It is not, therefore, less necessary to know the latter, than the

former effect. But, how could this knowledge be acquired, but by the perceptions of pain and inconvenience, as well as of pleasure and advantage? Without the feeling of the former, things noxious to our bodies might silently continue to affect them, and death would surprise us, before we were apprehensive of danger. On the other hand, *pain* and *debility* admonish us of pernicious effects, and prompt us to avoid them, or to apply their proper remedies. What useful experience do children, in this manner, acquire! Nor let us complain that the pains, endured, are too severe. We find that, even by their severity, mankind are not sufficiently instructed. Do diseases, calamities, or death itself, so frequently incurred, check general imprudence, and temerity?

5thly; If there are many *evils* of a portentous aspect which can neither be foreseen, nor prevented, by human circumspection

spection and diligence, be it considered that these are the consequences of those general laws of nature, without which no plan of human conduct could be devised, or pursued. For, if the course of events proceeded not in a fixed and determined tenor, *invention, prudence, and forethought* would be destroyed. Suppose the *general laws of nature* abrogated, or suspended, what foundation could be supplied to *understanding, wisdom, or choice?* Is it not evident that *wisdom* consists in the preference of the best *ends*, and in the adoption of the best *means* for their attainment? Does not *liberty* consist in the election of different ends, and means? But, what *election* could take place, if neither *ends*, nor *means*, could be defined; what *wisdom* could be manifested, if all events proceeded not in a regular and appointed order and train; what *liberty* could be exercised, when every thing was hurried along in a fortuitous and indiscriminate manner, or, at least, causes operated, of which

we could have no knowledge, or anticipation? To beings, therefore, endued with reason, *general laws* are indispensably necessary. If these were frequently suspended, or counteracted, no schemes of provision for futurity could be devised. While every *evil* was averted, and every enjoyment obtained, without man's foresight, and exertion, no care, industry, prudence, or activity, could be shewn. Our species, deprived of every motive to action, would languish in torpid indolence. The golden age of the poets, however pleasing to the imagination, especially as described in the beautiful verses of Ovid,* would

“ Ver erat æternum, placidique tēpentibus auris
 “ Mulcebant Zephyri natos sine semine flores.
 “ Mox etiam fruges tellus inarata ferebat,
 “ Nec renovatus ager gravidis canebat aristis.
 “ Flumina jam lactis, jam flumina nectaris ibant,
 “ Flavaque de viridi stillabant ilice mella.”

Metam. l. i. v. 107, and sequen.

“ Spring was perennial; and, with breezes bland,
 “ Spontaneous flow'rs the fostering Zephyrs fann'd;

would not be adapted to the present condition of man. Much of our enjoyments proceeds from our experience of pain, or inconvenience, and is heightened by the contrast. Even our most virtuous and exalted satisfactions depend on the consciousness of having struggled with success, or endured with fortitude. Moderate fatigue renders rest desirable, and sleep sound, and refreshing. Hunger is the most delicious seasoning of food. The care and labour, necessary for the support and convenience of life, strengthen both mind and body. They promote health, they stimulate invention, exercise sagacity, and produce a variety of conveniences, and comforts. Many useful and ingenious arts owe their origin to man's necessities; and, from want, penury, and danger, are drawn abundance, elegance,

D 4

and

“ The soil, unplough'd, produc'd the swelling grain,
“ And full ears whiten'd o'er th' unfallow'd plain.
“ Their streams of milk, or nectar, rivers roll'd,
“ And the green oak distill'd the honied gold.”

and security. Without human industry, the earth is a barren waste ; by industrious application, it teems with plenty, and is adorned with all the beauties of nature, improved by art. Invested with fruits and flowers it pours forth its copious treasures.* Meadows afford rich pastures ; the plains wave with corn ; the hills are covered with shady forests, which supply the materials for human habitations.

Indeed, it may be observed that all mechanical arts originate in the inconveniences to which man is naturally exposed, and are directed to mitigate his distress, to supply his wants, to ease his labour, or to facilitate the application of his powers. Even the fine arts owe much of their perfection to human sufferings, and affliction. That the first rude attempts at architecture were intended to defend

* "Fundit humi facilem victimum justissima tellus."—VIRG.

defend man from the inclemency of the skies, cannot be doubted. These beginnings led to the exercise of more ingenuous powers, till the art was displayed in all its elegance and splendour. How much would the fields of *Poetry*, *Painting*, and *Music* be circumscribed, if man were not susceptible of those sympathetic, or magnanimous affections, which these arts are employed in describing, or imitating, but which are excited chiefly by the sorrows and calamities to which our race is exposed !

If, by the ordinary course of nature, *bad men* only should be subject to suffering, and the *good* entirely exempted from it, how could the exact discrimination necessary to the end in view, be exercised. The former are often connected, by the ties of nature, or of affection, with others, whose morals are not so pure. Ought their relatives, friends, acquaintance, and countrymen, to be also secured from danger

danger, and distress? What, then, would be the order of nature, what the complexion of its laws, subject to so many exceptions, and suspended by so many sudden interventions? It must, therefore, be granted, that these laws are not to be counteracted, but for the most important reasons, although their observance may occasion some severe hardships. These laws must occasionally produce tempests, inclement weather, diseases, earthquakes, shipwrecks, and conflagrations, which may overwhelm and destroy both *good* and *bad* men.

Nor are these *civils absolute*, and destitute of all benefit. They rouse the slumbering faculties of mankind, direct them to objects before unobserved, and lead to salutary discoveries. Hence, future safety is ensured. If men would diligently collect and record their past experiences of danger, human life would be rendered infinitely more secure, and agreeable, than it

it is, by the neglect of these admonitions.

6^{thly}; After all, it cannot be denied that many distresses and afflictions are not reducible to any of the categories, already mentioned. These, however, have no small influence in correcting, or regulating, human morals. They either give rise to many virtues of the first importance, or tend to foster, and improve them. By human misery a field is opened to *compassion*, the most engaging branch of *benevolence*, without which every benevolent feeling would consist in *congratulation*; and, while we could not *weep with them that weep*, we should only have occasion to *rejoice with them that do rejoice**—an affection much less tender, and less adapted to inspire us with a true sense of fellow-feeling, than the former—an affection also requiring no exertion in behalf of

* Rom. xii. 15.

of our fellow mortals. All pain and trouble being removed, no room would be left for *consolation*, or *comfort*, nor for *benevolence*, nor *gratitude*, nor for that *reciprocation of good offices*, which gives rise to the sweetest *charities* of life.

Besides, by the *civils* of our present condition, we are taught just estimates of things, and are disgusted with the destructive allurements of pleasure, riches, and power. Uninterrupted prosperity enervates the mind, and begets the vile temper of insolence, and forgetfulness of dependence on God. Seneca justly observes, that “since all extremes are pernicious, the intemperance of prosperity is the most dangerous of all. It affects the brain, presents to the mind vain and deceitful images, and suffuses obscurity between truth and falsehood. The mind, unless something occurs to admonish us of the lot of mortality, is constantly muddled by the flow of porous

“perous circumstances.”* Hence, we have every reason to conclude that, in our present state, adversity is absolutely necessary to impress, on our minds, a conviction of the utter insignificance of all external possessions, and enjoyments, and to bring us to sober and correct reflection, the foundation of all solid and permanent happiness.

7thly; The adversity of good men makes their virtue shine with brighter lustre, and attract greater admiration. Here, I must again quote the words of Seneca.—“For the general good, the best “of men endure warfare, and suffer toil. “The intention of the Deity, and of every “good man, is the same; namely, to “shew that what the vulgar desire, or “dread, is neither good, nor evil.”† That is, there is nothing really good, beautiful, or great, which is not connected with wisdom

* *De Providentia*, cap. iv. † *De Providentia*. cap. v.

dom and virtue. These can smooth what is rough, exalt what is mean, render hardships easy, and convert, into sweetness, the most bitter ingredients in the lot of man. Is there any thing that excites such admiration and love of virtue, as the view of a man, truly brave, struggling with adversity, whose integrity, and decided adherence to truth and religion, neither popular clamour, nor despotic power, nor chains, nor death, nor instant torture, can shake, or impair ? I cannot refrain quoting another passage, from the moralist already cited, which is so common, that it has become proverbial, but is, at the same time, so splendid, that the mind dwells on it with unallayed pleasure.—“ Behold a “ scene worthy of the contemplation of “ the Deity attentive to his own work ; be- “ hold a match worthy of God—that of a “ brave man grappling with hostile for- “ tune.”* From such spectacles what glory

* *De Providentia.* cap. ii.

glory and strength are derived to the cause of truth, justice, and religion ! Consider the history of those great and good men who, in different ages and countries, have risen in defence of the rights and liberties of their fellow-citizens, and, at the expence of their own fortune, and comfort, have founded governments on the basis of equal law, and impartial justice ! Consider those who have, by the sacrifice of their ease, nay, even of their lives, maintained the cause of truth, and true religion ! Who, on reviewing the death of Socrates, is not inspired with the warmest love of virtue, and penetrated with the deepest detestation of vice ! But, why mention Socrates, since the history of our religion furnishes more illustrious examples ? To say nothing of its Author, whose instructions, life, and sufferings, can bear no comparison with any thing recorded in ordinary story, what a glorious harvest was produced by the distresses of christian heroes,

roes, and the blood which martyrs so calmly and nobly shed ! How often has the patience and constancy of those, who gloriously maintained their religious profession, in the midst of torture itself, converted the ferocious souls of their persecutors, and moved them to embrace that very faith which they had undertaken to extinguish !

While virtuous men thus struggle for the general good, they aspire to their own highest felicity. Virtue is confirmed by exercise, and the mind grows stronger and stronger every day, till, by this discipline, its views being sublimed, and all its powers invigorated, it obtain that stable and unalterable serenity and joy which can be procured in no other manner. What greater delight to a rational being can be conceived, than to have performed, or suffered, so much for the sake of duty ! Who, that has the true spirit of a man, not to say, of a *christian*, or that has the
smallest

smallest regard for the real dignity of human nature, but must acknowledge that great and good men possessed, amidst labours, troubles, and torture itself, consolations and joys which infinitely surpass the most exquisite sensual pleasures, and all the splendors of wealth, of pomp, and of power; and of which the degenerate mind can form no conception? They were supported by conscious integrity, and a sense of the divine favour, and were refreshed, invigorated, and raised, to triumphal exultation, by the certain hope of a blessed immortality. To use another sentiment of the Stoical moralist, already frequently quoted, “If the choice were offered them, they would not relinquish their perils, or their sufferings, connected with such real dignity of character, or exchange them for all the affluence of prosperous turpitude.”

8thly; Nor are the sufferings of pious and virtuous men beneficial only to a pre-

sent generation. Their benefit extends to remote posterity, by the power of example, and the lessons which history delivers. In the record of the magnanimity and unshaken firmness which good men have displayed, an amiable and attractive pattern is furnished for the imitation of succeeding ages. All the better principles of our nature are called into action, and, while we love and admire, we are prompted to wish for the opportunities of acting a similar part. Could the uninterrupted prosperity of virtue excite such generous and sympathetic sentiments, or could virtue be displayed with such uncontested lustre, while she had no clouds to dispel by her radiance, no tempests to compose by her emerging serenity ? By the warfare, which the virtuous are often obliged to maintain, good men are, in succeeding ages, placed in greater security, and the bad are more exposed to suspicion. We, thence, learn how little credit is due to the calumnies of the abandoned.

doned, who, in order to conceal their fraud, or to secure their power, employ the hypocritical pretext of public utility, to overwhelm their opponents. History, by affording numberless examples of this detestable wickedness, suggests proportionable caution, and defence against it.

9thly; Certain bounds are, in the course of human affairs, prescribed to human depravity. If it were to prevail to an atrocious degree, society could not subsist. In all ages have arisen men of superior virtue, and energy of character, who have endeavoured to arrest the progress of corruption, and, if they have not succeeded to the utmost extent, and have often suffered for their generous and noble attempts, they have, yet, rendered great service to mankind, reclaimed some, and saved others from the contagion of vice.

The *Waldenses*, in the vallies of Piedmont, and the *Albigenses*, in the south of

France, preserved pure Christianity, when it had expired in the greater part of the Christian world. *Wickliffe*, in England—and *John Huss*, and *Jerome of Prague*, preceded *Luther*, in the maintenance of Christian doctrine. *Erasmus* ridiculed the absurdities of *Popery* which he had not the courage publicly to abjure. Many other instances might be produced, and no doubt can be entertained that intelligent and good men, even in the darkest ages, secretly reprobated the gross corruptions of religion, and transmitted this reprobation to their children. They, thus, sowed the good seed which was, afterwards, to spring, and to produce the rich crop of the *Reformation*. Let these facts be an awful warning to oppressors, and tyrants, whether *religious*, or *political*, in all periods and countries. They contend with *God*, and will find the contest to be very unequal.

Extremes

Extremes tend to produce their own cure. A general relaxation of morals provokes the better energies of our race, and calls forth stronger exertions to oppose, and reform it. Neither the supine negligence of mankind, nor the fury of the profligate, have ever been able to prevent some rays of truth from illuminating men's minds, with more or less degrees of lustre, or kindling the sparks of virtue. Truth, though restrained, has never been completely overwhelmed.—*Day unto day uttering speech;** times and seasons appointed by Providence ; the labours of men born for the benefit of mankind ; and unforeseen occurrences and events have, at last, raised her depressed head. Under the ashes of the most abominable superstition, some sparks of true religion have, as has been, just now, stated, been preserved. The folly and atrocity of her enemies have tended to encircle her with a

* Psalm xix, 2,

brighter radiance, as the clouds, which the sun disperses, evince the power of his rays; and the fogs of corruption, which are, thus, dissipated, render the succeeding day more salubrious and delightful. The seeds of truth, and virtue, which able and virtuous men have sown, spring up gradually, and, at last, produce their harvest, in every important department of life.

It is, thus, that, by a species of fermentation, corruption is defecated, and her noxious effects are, finally, purged away. Individuals, whose characters have become atrocious, either ruin themselves by their vices, and shorten their days, or are cut off by the stroke of public justice. Communities and states, which have been completely gangrened by dissolution of morals, and every species of degeneracy, are subdued by others of a less corrupt, and more energetic complexion. Witness the fates of the Babylonian, As-syrian,

syrian, Macedonian, and Roman empires. Witness the present state of so many corrupt and subjugated governments of Continental Europe.

After the long prevalence of idolatry, and superstition, in their most abominable forms, over nearly the whole inhabited, and even civilized globe, Christianity shed her benign light, which restored such a great proportion of the human species to the enjoyment of true religion, and opened the prospect of extending, in due time, to the whole world, this inestimable blessing. When a dark cloud had, for many ages, overspread the Christian community, and the human mind had lost even that light which science and literature had diffused from the Greek and Roman schools, the revival of letters renewed the nearly extinguished rays of knowledge; and the blessed reformation of religion, by opening anew the sacred Scriptures, disclosed the real

substance of Christianity, and afforded the means of exhibiting our holy faith in its genuine colours, and of making it be better understood than, perhaps, it had been, since the Apostolic times. At this present moment, there are strong indications of the further extension of the pure Gospel, while there is reason to hope that the dreadful convulsions, which the political state of Europe has undergone, may ultimately produce a defecation and improvement which could not, perhaps, have been effected without these violent struggles.

In fact, the deep and general corruption of the human species absolutely requires the infliction of suffering, and of various forms of distress, for its reformation. Calm reason, and the justest representations of things, are of little avail with minds blinded by prejudice, agitated by passion, or chained to sordid interest. When such a state of the *moral* world exists,

exists, men must suffer, severely and extensively, before they can be brought to sober reflection. The present times establish the truth of this position. The greater part of the old governments of Continental Europe had become extremely corrupt ; and their gross abuses were obvious to every observer. A considerable degree of knowledge was generally diffused, and the theory of government had become a common topic of philosophical discussion. An irreligious spirit, suggesting contempt for Christianity, had, almost every where, mingled with a false species of *philosophy*. While men clearly saw and felt the corruptions of their governments, they were willing to overturn them, but, they were not sufficiently enlightened to carry on the work of reformation in a wise and salutary manner. Hence, all the horrors, which accompanied the French revolution, have been, more or less, extended to every country which the French arms have subdued,

subdued, or French subtlety has seduced. It was common with Atheistical pretenders to philosophy to represent religion, as the exclusive source of persecution. Irreligious politics have, now, displayed the persecuting spirit in the most hideous forms. Carnage and desolation have been let loose among the nations, and much greater calamities, than those from which mankind so generally desired to be delivered, have been long experienced. The conviction of this melancholy result begins, now, to be impressed on men's minds. They have suffered too much, both from antiquated corruptions, and from the remedies recently applied to them, to be satisfied with either. It is vain to think of restoring barbarous policy, or feudal oppression. These seem to be gone for ever. On the other hand, the unprincipled violence, and relentless cruelty, which have attended the march of the French arms, have made a deep impression on men's minds, and inspired them

them with disgust and horror.* Whatever may be the peculiar termination of the present convulsed state of Europe, it seems, at any rate, probable, that, in due time, some proper temperature will ensue, and that, when the political body has been completely purified, it will assume a more healthy and vigorous appearance. But, could such result have been expected, without the experience of severe, and protracted *evils* ?

Thus, it appears that, in the *moral*, as well as in the *natural*, system, a certain balance is established ; and *corruption* itself tends, in some measure, either to her own cure, or to her extinction. It is, therefore, evident that, from *evil* itself, *good* often springs ; that the calamities of the virtuous are often subservient to their own, and to the general, felicity ; and that

no

* This was written before Bonaparte's overthrow, in 1814, by which this opinion is so strongly confirmed. It is still more confirmed by posterior events.

no constant connexion could ever have been maintained between *prosperity* and *virtue*, because the *latter* can, in many instances, be perfected only in the absence of the *former*. For, adversity affords “a “field for the display of some of the “noblest energies of our nature, and good “men sometimes glory in their misfor-“tunes, as brave soldiers glory in war.”*

10thly; To any person contemplating the divine dispensations, even in this world, and observing, through the various vicissitudes of human affairs, and the apparently intricate mazes of Providence, the *good* that is extracted from *evil*, what wonder and delight must arise! *What is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, of the wisdom and goodness of God; it passeth knowledge!*† But, in a future state of existence, in which good men will

* Seneca de Providentia. cap. iv.—See also Boetius de Consolatione Philosophiae. lib. iv.

† Ephes. iii. 18, 19.

will enjoy that consummate felicity which they have steadily anticipated here below, they will look back, with exultation, on their former labours, pains, and calamities; and survey their terrestrial course, as the appointed place of exercise in which they gained that unfading crown which they are to wear through eternity. Contemplating, in prospect, this glorious consummation, their souls must, even in the present state, be encouraged, strengthened, and cheered with such reflections as these. “ If the partial and circum-
“ scribed view of the divine government,
“ which this transitory and cloudy life af-
“ fords, produce such exquisite delight,
“ how must this be exalted and extended,
“ when, with refined and expanded facul-
“ ties, we shall be admitted to contem-
“ plate the entire series, connexion, and
“ harmony of the divine administration !
“ In comparison of this, how insignificant
“ appears every other enjoyment ! The
“ prospect of such felicity prompts the
“ desire

“ desire of departing from this dark and
“ weary scene, and of rushing into the
“ society of the good, and great, whom,
“ from all ages and countries, God had
“ determined to collect, as his chosen sub-
“ jects and friends, and as bearing the
“ impressive image of his moral perfec-
“ tions! No; for this very purpose has
“ man been sent into the world, that ac-
“ cess to this happy state might be opened
“ to him, through the various, and, often
“ intricate, passages of present duty!
“ But, what delight will result from the
“ recollection of the *evils* suffered, and of
“ the struggles undergone, by the wise
“ and gracious decree of the Governor
“ and Father of the moral world! What
“ joy and exultation will spring from
“ seeing, *face to face*, *what is now seen*,
“ *through a glass, darkly*,* and understand-
“ ing why success was, sometimes, denied
“ to virtuous endeavours! Then, shall be
“ clearly

* 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

“ clearly discerned the nice gradation of
“ minds, endued with different powers
“ and capacities, which was so wisely ar-
“ ranged, that the exercise of each faculty
“ might redound to the general good.
“ Then, united by the most endearing
“ ties, all the blessed will rejoice in their
“ common felicity, and in their mutual,
“ disinterested enjoyments. Then, in-
“ flamed with gratitude towards the
“ Deity, they will understand why it was
“ wisely appointed that the faithful to
“ truth and integrity should, on earth,
“ endure difficulties, should struggle with
“ passion, and every species of tempta-
“ tion, and, through the trials assigned
“ them by divine appointment, be ren-
“ dered susceptible of the highest felicity,
“ before they obtained, in heaven, their
“ everlasting triumph. Then, will be ex-
“ perienced, in the most impressive man-
“ ner, that *supreme happiness* consists in a
“ variety of mixed pleasures—in the re-
“ collection of *evils* which have terminated

“ in

“ in *good*; in the sense of acquired per-
“ fection; in a continual progress towards
“ higher improvement; in the conscious-
“ ness of the right use of faculties, and of
“ divine aid; in the reflection of sins
“ avoided; in the comparison of a state
“ of immutable bliss with that precarious
“ and fleeting stage of existence in which
“ man is, now, placed; and in the view of
“ that admirable arrangement of the whole
“ plan, which, every thing duly considered,
“ has secured the highest possible *good*
“ at the expence of the least possible
“ *evil.*”

On the whole, when we survey the pre-
sent administration of the Deity, as far as
it is exposed to our contracted ken, and,
at the same time, carry our view forward
to the succeeding scene, we are led, on
the most solid grounds, to conclude that
the *real* and *unavoidable evil*, which is per-
mitted in the general scheme, is ren-
dered

dered subservient to the highest attainable *good*.

In fact, it is very difficult to determine what *evil* is, in an absolute and positive sense. Every uneasy sensation, and whatever occasions vexation, trouble, or distress, we denominate *evil*. But, this denomination can be just only in contradistinction to that which is immediately pleasant and grateful to our senses. But, the proper criterion certainly is, the substantial and comprehensive *happiness* of sensitive beings, and, particularly, of such as are endued with *moral* and *intellectual powers*. If the means of attaining this can be found only in a certain portion of *endurance*, or in the *permission* of a certain degree of perversion, neither of these can be properly termed an *absolute evil*, since they are the indispensable means of obtaining a great preponderance of *advantage*.

Although some of the opinions of the ancient Stoicks were carried to extravagance, or expressed in too vague and indefinite a manner; yet, when they maintained that pain, and adversity, and all external accidents, were not *evils*, I am convinced that they understood the term *evil* in the relative sense which I have, just now, pointed out, and appropriated it exclusively to signify that which produced *absolute misery*, or, at least, such a preponderance of suffering, as was compensated by no greater *benefit*. In this sense, their opinions were just, though their language was inaccurate.

CHAPTER XII.

Some Observations on the Nature, State, and Faculties of Man.—Conclusion of the Book.

WHOMEVER is capable of considering the present condition of human nature, or will be at due pains to examine this subject, will find himself constrained to acknowledge that the present arrangement of the divine administration is completely adapted to that condition. He must see that, if this were altered, the whole of man's powers and faculties, the objects of his pursuit, and the entire scheme of his existence, must undergo a complete

change; in a word, that, with regard to him, a system entirely different must be introduced. The happiness of all animals consists in the constant exercise of the powers with which they are endued, and this exercise must be excited by the objects fitted to their respective natures. Absolute inactivity precludes every notion of enjoyment; yet, activity, implying exertion, supposes some impulse which must overcome the *vis inertiae* inherent in every *material substance*, such as the limbs and organs of all animals evidently are. This impulse must consist in the necessity of supplying some *want*, of gratifying some *desire*, or of removing or allaying some *pain*, or *uneasiness*.

The more various and exalted any powers and faculties are, a variety of impulses to call them into action must be proportionably adopted, and proportionable exertion to restrain each of them within its due bounds, and to make them all

all co-operate harmoniously to one great end, must be requisite. This is the case with man. He is endowed with a variety of powers, *mental*, and *corporal*, and his happiness consists in the right application of these. His bodily frame requires constant supply, and support, and, when these are obtained in such a measure, as prevents not the right exercise of his *mental*, and *nobler* powers, his corporal organs become the inlets of various pleasures. Man is surrounded by an infinity of objects which are capable of administering to his wants, or of supplying him with elegant convenience. But, for this purpose, he must, in the first place, feel the pressure of some *want*, and be stimulated by the desire of greater external enjoyment. He must vigorously apply his powers for the attainment both of what is *necessary*, and of what is *convenient*; and, how this vigorous application could take place without some antecedent *uncasiness*, it is hardly possible to conceive.

Our mental powers supply pleasures of a much higher order, than any corporal delights, and of immeasurable extent. For the attainment of these, however, constant cultivation and exercise are necessary, nor can these be carried on without labour and perseverance, and the renunciation of inferior enjoyments. Our *appetites, desires, affections, and passions*, are requisite to prompt us to action. But, the unceasing control of *reason* must be employed to restrain them within their proper bounds, and to limit them to those objects for the attainment of which they were evidently intended. Here, however, great application, diligence, caution, and self-denial, must be practised, and, till habit be confirmed, no small *pain*, and *endurance*, must be undergone. Nay, as our superior powers are progressive, and experience is absolutely necessary for their improvement, and ready application, it seems, in some measure, unavoidable that, in the early part of man's career, his *appetites*

petites and passions should, occasionally, run to excess, and subject him to the pain, and suffering, or distemper, which excess must produce, in smaller, or greater, degrees. At every period of his terrestrial course, mistake, circumscribed views, the surprise of unforeseen occurrences, occasional mental debility, and other similar causes, may, and actually do, involve, in immoral conduct, the best disciplined minds, and create that remorse, self-disapprobation, and repentance, which serve as cautions against similar failures, and as strong inducements to greater care, and diligence, in the future application of their nobler energies. With regard to the generality of men, want of education, both *intellectual*, and *moral*, powerful prejudices, ignorance, often involuntary, vicious example, false maxims current in the world, and strong natural passions, must hurry them into vices, highly prejudicial both to themselves, and to society. But, how could these be pre-

vented, but by the suspension of the law by which *moral causes*, and *effects*, are connected, and, consequently, by the removal of that great argument for *moral reformation*, drawn from the pernicious consequences of vice ?

As all our faculties are progressive, their cultivation must require unceasing pains, and privations ; and the predominance of the higher good, to be obtained by undergoing these, must furnish the principal motive for enduring this discipline. As new enjoyments result from advancing improvement, instruction can never cease, while *perfection* is not attained, which never can be the case in a present life. This consideration, together with that of man's capacities, leads his view directly to a future scene, in which every defect of the present will be completely remedied, and the divine government displayed in its unclouded glory. We are, hence, also convinced that the present is a state of

of probation from which *evil*, both *natural*, and *moral*, is inseparable.

Thus, when we examine the powers, the condition, and the whole character of human nature, we must infer that all the circumstances of the present state of man are adapted to that nature, as it is, now, constituted, and necessary to its ultimate improvement and happiness. This conclusion is dictated by the present view of things, and depends not, for its certainty, on refined, intricate, and abstruse speculation.*

The sentence, pronounced on Adam, after his fall, was, *in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground.*† This condemnation is not to be

* See, on this subject, *Ferguson's Principles of Moral and Political Science*, part i. chap. ii. sect. xvi.—See also many good observations in *Bulfinerus de Origine et Permissione Mali*. passim.

† Gen. iii. 19.

be considered merely in the light of a penal judgment, but also in that of an inevitable consequence of the condition in which the first human pair were placed by their transgression. The sentence has been executed, in all its extent, though in different manners, according to the different situations and circumstances of mankind. The lower classes of society have, in all ages and countries, *ate bread in the sweat of their face.* Those of the middling station, commonly the most intelligent and virtuous, are happily compelled, by their circumstances, to make choice of some profession, which requires application, industry, sagacity, knowledge, and prudence, and is useful to the community. The opulent, and the elevated by rank, and hereditary distinction, are prompted, by their ambition, or their desire of pleasure, to engage in pursuits which are often much more harrassing, and laborious, than those tasks which *literally draw the sweat from every pore.*

The

The Rulers, and Lords, and Princes of the earth often engage in contentions, and wars, and devastations, which *sweat them* more severely than their subjects are oppressed by the hardest labour. For, to omit every other consideration, in such cases,

“ *Tacita sudant præcordia culpa.*”*

Juv. Sat. i. v. 167.

It will, now, be proper to collect, into one point, all that has been stated in refutation of the objections urged against the *wisdom* and *goodness* of the Deity, particularly those which are drawn from the permission of *evil*. It has been shewn that defect is inherent in every created being. It has been also proved that it was completely consistent with the divine perfections

* Their bosoms *sweat* with secret crime.

perfections to create *free agents*, and that this creation rendered the *permission* of *moral evil* unavoidable. It has also appeared that there is every ground for believing that, to admit, into the general system, a race of *intelligent* and *moral creatures*, endued with the very powers, and placed in the identical circumstances, which are peculiar to mankind, was conducive to the sum of *universal good*. It has been evinced that the *evils*, whether *natural*, or *moral*, to which man is exposed, have been grossly exaggerated, and that even *external prosperity*, and *adversity*, are not so unequally distributed, as is commonly imagined. It has also been demonstrated that a preponderance of *good* is, by the divine superintendence, extracted from the *evils* which, in reality, exist. In fine, I have endeavoured to shew that the present condition of man is exactly suited to his powers, principles of action, and general constitution; and that this condition directs our view to a future

future scene of exact retribution, and of consummate order and perfection.

From this induction we may fairly conclude that no objection against the *wisdom* and *goodness* of God can be justly urged from the existence of that portion of *evil*, or *suffering*, which is permitted under his administration. Nay, those very circumstances, which seemed the most difficult to be reconciled to the divine perfections, have proved the most powerful illustrations of them, by shewing the benign Parent of mankind bringing *good* out of *evil*, and making even *corruption* itself bend to the *general happiness*. That *corruption* can never be an *immediate* means of *good* is undeniab.^e* But, after man's perverted liberty had introduced *moral evil* into the world, it is a striking evidence, both of the *divine wisdom*, and *divine goodness*, to render even this

* See Bulling, *de Origine et Permissione Mali*. sect ii.

this *perversion* subservient to the highest possible good of the whole moral creation.

Thus, as we have gradually proceeded, the fogs of error have been dispersed, and the light of truth has dawned on the mind. In like manner, the traveller, who has wandered in darkness, ignorant of the situation and bearings of the parts of the country, through which he strays, sees, at last, the sun dart his beams across the clouds, and dissipate the mists that have surrounded him. The wanderer ascends an eminence, descries the objects, before concealed from his view, and recognizes their particular and relative situation, and colour. He admires the cultivated landscape ; he traces the course of the streams by which it is watered ; he enjoys the contrast of the abrupt and lofty mountain, and of the barren heath, now, distinctly, presented to him ; and, with inexpressible delight, remarks the villages and towns which the view contains,

tains, and the variegated prospect which the wide compass of vision exhibits. When, in the next Book, we enjoy the still brighter Sun of Revelation, we shall *see light in its light,* and rejoice in its perfect day.†*

* Psalm xxxvi. 9.

† Prov. iv. 18.

BOOK III.

BOOK III.

THE SOLUTION GIVEN, BY REVELATION, ESPECIALLY
BY THE GOSPEL, OF THE OBJECTIONS AGAINST
THE WISDOM AND GOODNESS OF GOD.—PRACTICAL
INFERENCES FROM THE SPECULATIVE PART OF
THE ESSAY.

CHAPTER I.

Preliminary.

THAT mankind are universally sunk in a deplorable state of depravity is equally established by conscience, and by experience. The original and primary cause of this corruption has, as we have seen, afforded subject of deep inquiry, and intricate discussion, to the thinking part of

mankind, in all ages, and countries ; and a sketch of the history of this controversy has, already, been exhibited in the 5th chapter of Book II. of this Essay. *Moral corruption, and the prevalence of those natural evils,* by whose united force our species is so miserably assailed, have, all along, furnished the strongest objections to the divine *wisdom* and *goodness*, as has been, already, shewn. I trust that, to these, as far as the views of mere reason can extend, satisfactory answers have been given. It is, however, very difficult to determine the exact compass of the human faculties, unenlightened by Revelation. For, at no period was man ever destitute of some portion of divine light. The Jewish dispensation certainly imparted some degrees of supernatural information, even to regions very remote from that in which it was established. Such light has been shed, on the world, by *Christianity*, that even *reason* itself has been invigorated, and guided, by it, in all its

its exertions; has, thus, acquired more enlarged views; and, been enabled to consider *theological* and *moral* subjects with an accuracy, and comprehension, which were unknown to the ages that preceded the Christian economy. Hence, much of Christian information is imperceptibly mingled with the results to which the mind seems to be led by its own intellectual powers. Of this information even infidels have secretly participated, however averse they may be from the acknowledgment.

Notwithstanding all that has been said in refutation of the objections against the *wisdom* and *goodness* of the Deity, some difficulties still remain which can be removed only by *Revelation*. The main difficulty seems to lie in pointing out the cause of the *universal corruption* of human nature. It is, indeed, true, as has been, already, fully evinced, that no created being can be *perfect*, and that *intelligence*

and *liberty* imply the possibility of the grossest *depravation*. These, however, equally imply the *possibility* of completely attaining their ends, and of *moral* and *intelligent* creatures exhibiting that perfection of which limited faculties are susceptible. We observe the inferior creation, in this lower world, fulfilling the ends of their *being*, and enjoying the happiness for which they were designed. Man, of all terrestrial creatures, has perverted his powers, and is deprived of his felicity. What account is to be given of this strange appearance, so repugnant to what we should be naturally led to expect? For, in proportion as the faculties, bestowed, are exalted and extensive, their objects ought to be attained, and their results produced. Indeed, if such powers are abused, and perverted, the misery, thus occasioned, must be proportionably greater. Accordingly, those beings of a nature superior to that of man, who violated their allegiance to the Deity, and corrupted

corrupted their faculties, incurred irretrievable and aggravated misery. But, other beings of a rank exalted above humanity, maintained their obedience, and enjoy the full felicity of their nature. In these two cases, we have an instance both of the *perversion*, and of the *right* and *happy use of liberty*. But, how comes it to pass that, in the whole human race, through all its successive generations, not one instance can be produced of *perfect rectitude*, even according to that natural standard of *morality* erected in the human soul? At present, neither conscience, nor observation, can suggest such instance; nor has history recorded it.

To what cause, then, is this *universal corruption* of human nature to be ascribed? Is man, with all that propensity to *civil* which adheres to him, and, which, in a deliberate hour, he must condemn, both in himself, and in others, to be considered, as the same creature, which he

was, when originally formed? Or has some dire catastrophe taken place, with regard to the *moral condition* of our species? Has not some desperate perversion been introduced into the human mind, by which its moral energies are enfeebled, and its happiness destroyed? By what means has this taint been diffused over the whole human race, and reduced them to a condition incapable of unsinning virtue, and of unmixed happiness? If God created man in a state of *depravity*, his *wisdom, goodness, and other moral attributes*, are not yet sufficiently vindicated. For, although the *possibility* of perversion be inseparable from *created intelligence*, still this cannot imply that this *perversion* should exist without exception, and pervade the whole human race. If mankind have, since their original creation, suffered in their mental constitution, from what fatal source has this deplorable *evil* been derived? How could this revolution

lution be permitted under the administration of the Deity ?

The ancient Heathen Philosophers themselves were deeply impressed with the fact of man's *universal corruption*; and their difficulty to account for it equalled their conviction of its existence. Nay, the persuasion of this melancholy truth seems to have been general, from the most early periods. It was confessed, because it was observed, and felt.—

—“Qua terra patet, fera regnat Erinnys,
“ In facinus jurasse putas; deut ocios omnes
“ Quas meruere pati, sic stat sententia, pœnas.”*

The hypotheses, devised to account for the phenomenon, have been briefly mentioned in the 5th chapter of the Book immediately preceding. I shall add only that, among the ancient philosophers, it was

* Ovid Metam. l. i. v. 241, &c.

Wherever earth extends, fierce fury reigns;
You'd think them bound, by oath, in vice's chains.
Let them the well-earn'd punishment endure;
Just vengeance strike them all!—The doom is sure:

was common to call their instructions the *cathartics*, or *purgatives* of the soul, implying, by this term, that it had contracted a disease which it was necessary to cure before any progress could be made in virtue. The erroneous and highly absurd opinion of two opposite, and equally powerful, *principles*, the one absolutely *good*, and the other absolutely *evil*, adopted by the *Manicheans*, and originally broached by the *Persian Magi*, appears to have proceeded from the conviction of the *degeneracy of human nature*. This, however, as has been shewn, in the chapter referred to, more than once, has been denied by certain denominations of Christians, who have maintained that man, even in his present state, has no more propensity to *evil*, than to *good*, and that all the sins and vices of our species are to be ascribed to the imperfection belonging to all created natures, and especially to those of the human rank and condition, under the influence of bad education,

education, vicious example, strong temptation, and early habits.* But, this solution admits, in fact, the conclusion which it is produced to obviate. For, it still remains to be inquired, how this bad education, this vicious example, these strong temptations, consisting chiefly in a perverse turn of mind, and these early habits of depravity, have acquired such *universal* influence ? How has it happened that none of the human species have overcome these obstructions to virtue, and that vice has obtained such uncontrolled dominion over all ? That virtue is productive of happiness, and the more it is cultivated, even in that defective degree which human nature now realizes, the more

* I cannot help remarking that this rejection of the *corruption of human nature*, by *Christian Divines*, though it be admitted by *heathen* philosophers, and poets, is a striking instance of polemical perversity. The heathens had no system, on this point, to support—The Christian Disputant had devised one, by the maintenance of which his abilities were to be displayed, and his fame established.

more secure and comfortable mankind become, is incontrovertible; nay, *virtue* is obligatory solely on account of this felicitous tendency. So blind, however, are mankind to their real interest, and so enslaved by their passions, that none, Christ excepted, since the days of Adam, have attained the complete standard of duty, and, consequently, the full measure of human felicity? Even those, who deny any original taint in our nature, derived from the first transgression, and any punishment incurred, by the human race, in consequence of the *fall*, acknowledge that every one is subject to punishment for his own failures, and never attempt to shew one single instance of spotless obedience. They grant, therefore, the point on which I, now, insist, and seem not to be aware that, even admitting the full force of their arguments, they remove the difficulty only one step further, and, denying *original sin*, or rather *original perversion*, they acknowledge general *evil*,

or *suffering*, derived from *original sin*, which involves as great injustice, as the doctrine, which they oppose, seems to them to imply.* They have never been able to produce one single instance, Christ excepted, of perfect obedience, even to the *law of nature*, or to refute the declarations, that *all flesh hath corrupted his way upon the earth*;† that *there is none righteous, no not one*; and that *all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*.‡ It cannot be contested that, even in very young children, whose situation is perfectly the same, and
who

* See Taylor on *Original Sin*. This writer labours to prove that temporal death is the only consequence of the *fall*, and acknowledges that death has, on this account, *passed upon all men*. He maintains justly, that *sin* cannot, strictly speaking, be transferred, but must be *personal*; and that every man is punished for his own *personal sins*. As all men, however, suffer death in consequence of the *fall*, they incur *evil*, not on account of their own, but another's transgression; and, as *all sin, all have been, and are corrupt*. The cause of this *universal corruption* constitutes the main difficulty.

† Gen. vi. 12.

‡ Rom. iii. 10. 23.

who are placed under the same discipline, a great diversity of dispositions is observable, and, in some cases, strong propensities to perversity and vice, which it requires assiduous attention and labour to correct, are often manifested; and that, before the human mind, even with the best natural inclinations, can be brought to a tolerable state of *moral order*, repeated faults must be amended; and reproof, admonition, expostulation, instruction, restraint, and good example, apply their most powerful energies.

It is, further, extremely difficult to reconcile the supposition of no inherent perversity in the present state of human nature, with the accounts of its *original* excellence, given in the only authentic records of the creation of man which we possess, as well as with the express declarations of the sacred Books concerning the *universal corruption* of our species. It is impossible, by any metaphorical glosses,
to

to enervate these declarations either of the primitive dignity, or of the subsequent degeneracy, of human nature. Of these it may be observed, what has been often remarked by comprehensive penetration, with regard to true *policy*, and *wisdom*, even in the common affairs of life. There is a *policy*, founded on *low cunning*, and dictated by contracted experience, which leads to suppose every plain, honest man to be a fool. But, a larger scale of experience convinces us that *honesty* is the best *policy*, and that the intelligent *simplicity* of nature is real *wisdom*. In like manner, fine-spun comments and glosses, in direct opposition to the plain and obvious meaning of Scriptural expressions, please, at first, by their apparent ingenuity. But, deeper reflection brings us often back to the meaning which the mind apprehended, at first, and convinces us of its reality, and truth.

In

In fact, the original excellence and happiness of human nature seem to have been generally impressed on the minds of mankind ; or, at least, there seems to have been a very general persuasion that the primitive state of man was very different from what it now is. Hence, the tradition of a *golden age*, when men lived in peace and security, unpolluted by vice, and free from those multiplied *evils* which it produces. The general prevalence of this tradition, in distant and various parts of the world, is very concisely, though satisfactorily, shewn by Grotius, in his admirable Treatise *on the Truth of Christianity*. Whether this tradition originated in early Revelations, or sprang from human opinion, it implies that mankind have been generally impressed with the conviction that their present state is not what it ought to be, and that their original condition was more conformable to the elevated faculties, and capacity of virtue,

tue, with which the Creator endued human nature.

Conscience must convince every human being that this is the fact, that, in his mind, is erected a standard of duty, which he cannot reach, and that he has cause to condemn himself for many faults, and vices, which might have been avoided, and which proceeded entirely from a corrupt bent of his mind.

For this general taint, pervading human nature, unenlightened reason will, in vain, endeavour to account; and, till a sufficient solution of the phenomenon is afforded, some objections may still be started against the divine *wisdom*, and *goodness*. For, although *intelligence* and *liberty* are, as has been fully shewn, inseparable from the *possibility* of perversion, yet, it may be said that there existed no necessity for this perversion's becoming

universal, through a whole species of rational beings. Was it not possible for some, at least, to escape the general degeneracy, and to exhibit human nature in its primitive excellence? The direful effects of this degeneracy are evident through every sphere of human life, and must unavoidably affect the whole species, through every stage of their existence. Could no remedy have been applied to so calamitous and extensive a disorder? Could infinite *wisdom* and *goodness* devise no plan for restoring mankind, or, at least, any considerable number of them, to their original capacity of pure happiness? Since it must have been foreseen that a whole race of rational beings must be, for ever, deprived of the felicity attached to their nature, and incur the misery consequent on the depravation of it, would it not have been better that a race, so circumstanced, should have been excluded from the scale of existence,

which

which they could neither adorn, nor contribute to support and improve?

For the solution of these difficulties unassisted *Reason* can afford us no light, and, in order to obtain it, we must have recourse to *Revelation*. We shall find that this perfect source of instruction fully vindicates the *wisdom* and *goodness* of God in the original formation of man, and clearly points out the cause of his general corruption. For this also it declares that a *remedy*, as efficacious and comprehensive as the rational nature would admit, has been provided, and that it has, already, produced powerful effects, and will continue to operate till the end of the world.

In order to illustrate this subject, in some tolerable manner, I shall, first, consider the state in which Scripture declares that God created man; then, explain in what light we are to view the

fall of our first parents, as the origin of the corruption of their posterity ; lastly, contemplate the remedy provided, by God, for this universal calamity, and all its direful consequences.

CHAPTER II.

*The Account, given by Scripture, of the Fall,
and Degeneracy of Man.*

THE sacred Scriptures inform us that man, as well as the other creatures of God, was created *very good*,* nay, *after the image and likeness of him that created him, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness*;† *that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions*;‡ *that man was made but a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honour, and in-*

* Gen. i. 30.

† Col. iii. 10.—Eph. iv. 24.

‡ Eccles. vii. 29.

*vested with dominion over the inferior creation.**

Thus, the Scripture-account of the creation of man perfectly vindicates the *wisdom* and *goodness* of the Creator, by informing us that, as man came from his hands, he was a creature worthy of those perfections which belong to his Author. The proper sense, in which the expressions, conveying this information, are to be understood, will, afterwards, be examined.

While Scripture, thus, declares the original state of man, it no less explicitly accounts for that disorder and deformity which have degraded our species, by pronouncing *that man, being in honour, abode not, but became like the brutes that perish*;† that our first parents, Adam and Eve, sinned against the law of God, that their

* Psalm viii. 5, 6.

† Psalm xlix. 12.

their transgression tainted their nature, and every thing proceeding from it, and that both they and their posterity, being deprived of virtue, became, on that account, obnoxious to the condemnation of sin. For, in the words of Scripture, *who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?** *Who is man that he should be righteous, or he, that is born of a woman, that he should be justified?* *Behold, he putteth no trust in his Saints, yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight.* *How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh up iniquity like water.*† *Thus, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death, by sin; so, death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*‡

Such is the general doctrine of Scripture with regard both to the original dignity, and the subsequent degeneracy and corruption of human nature. I shall,

II 4

now,

* Job xiv. 4.

† Job xv. 14, 15, 16.

‡ Rom. v. 12.

now, proceed to consider the proper light in which its declarations, on these two points, are to be viewed. For, even Revelation itself, instructing us on subjects where reason absolutely fails us, in regard to *fact*, and *positive information*, is still to be rationally interpreted, and, while it uses *human language*, in conveying, to us, *divine truth*, is always to be explained according to the rules of just criticism, and to the nature of the particular subjects which it treats.

That man, or, indeed, any creature, could have been formed absolutely perfect, has, already, been shewn to be impossible. It has, also, been proved that, provided as much *capacity* and *happiness* be, on the whole, distributed, as the circumstances of created and limited natures will admit, it is not inconsistent with *almighty power*, and *infinite wisdom* and *goodness*, to produce sensitive beings, of any rank, of any capacity for happiness, and placed

placed in any circumstances, even the most circumscribed, if their powers and enjoyments exceed their infirmities and inconveniences ; if they enjoy more *pleasure* than they suffer *pain* ; and nothing more is imposed, on them, than they are capable of performing.

But, to this inferiority of existence, this circumscription of capacity, this low ebb of enjoyment, man was far from being reduced, at his creation. Though the last and youngest of God's works, here below, no sooner had his Creator *breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he had become a living soul,** than he perceived his immense superiority over the other creatures that surrounded him. Possessed of *more knowledge than the beasts of the earth, and of more wisdom than the fowls of heaven,†* he saw himself Lord of the lower world, which submitted to his dominion.

* Gen. ii. 7.

+ Job xxxv. 11.

minion. Instructed, with regard to his own nature, and to those of the other creatures, he felt that, with these, he could hold no congenial intercourse, by reason of the disparity of their faculties, and that he himself was more allied to the *spiritual* world ; and, as he was impressed with the *image* of his Creator, so, he was formed for communion with him. For, *God made man in his image, after his likeness.**

Some have had the extravagance to suppose that *this image, this likeness of God,* consisted in the structure of man's body, and that the Deity, in the act of creation, assumed a corporal form, because Christ is said to have been in *the likeness of men*;† and God *to have walked in the garden, in the cool of the day, to have emitted a voice, and Adam, and his wife, after their fall, to have hid themselves from the presence of the Lord, amongst the trees of the garden.*‡

On

* Gen. i. 26.

† Phil. ii. 7.

‡ Gen. iii. 8. 10.

On the other hand, some Christians, with great pretensions to philosophy, would understand, by the phrase of man's being made in the *image and likeness of God*, only his superiority over the inferior animals, and his capacity of the Deity's vicegerent on earth, in the same manner as we find both angels, and men, styled, in Scripture, not only the *sons of God*, but even *Gods*.

It is, however, to be observed, that, Genesis i. 27. 28. the creation of man in the *image of God*, is mentioned, as distinct from man's dominion over the creatures, as antecedent to it, and as its ground and cause. So, *God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and said, have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowls of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.** In fact, it is the superiority of

* Gen. i. 27, 28.

of man's faculties that qualifies him for exercising dominion over the inferior animals. It is the boundless *perfection* of God himself that constitutes him the Sovereign of the universe. To limit this *image* of the Deity to dominion over the other terrestrial creatures is to assign, to the expression, a lower sense than was adopted even by the Heathens themselves. For, Ovid, in his account of the creation of man, expressly says

*“Sanctius his animal, mentisque capacious alter,
“Deerat adhuc, et quod dominari in cætera possit.”**

Here the capacity of rule is referred to the higher faculties with which human nature was endued.

With much greater reason, therefore, may man be said to have born the *image* of his Creator, in respect of his *spiritual*, *rational*,

* Metam. I. i. v. 76, 77.

'There wanted still, of more capacious mind,
A being, who for rule might be design'd,

rational, moral, and immortal mind, and in the satisfaction which he enjoys in resembling the Deity in the exercise of his exalted powers. Scripture, which is the best interpreter of itself, has positively represented this *image*, as consisting in these *rational* and *moral* powers, and in the right application of them, which is procured by divine grace. But, this last, or rather, the necessity of it, is what those, who restrict the *image* of God in the soul of man to simple *dominion* over the inferior creation, desire to avoid. Such is the effect of preconceived *theories*, and *dogmatical doctrines*, that they warp the simple dictates of the judgment, and prevent the admission of plain and obvious truth. This remark is as applicable to men of learning and talents, as to the ignorant vulgar. Nay, it is, perhaps, more applicable to the former than to the latter. These have no *favourite system* to maintain, and are not inflated with the pride of learning, or science. When they err,
they

they err from simple ignorance, or prejudice rashly admitted. The former have a species of *false honour* to support, and, rather than yield their point, will defend the most paradoxical and absurd opinions. The vulgar are, it is true, extremely obstinate, and strongly wedded to inveterate prejudices. But, they have not the *pride* of system, or the *vanity* of learning ; and *pride* and *vanity* are, of all human passions, the most unconquerable and violent.

But, to return to the subject immediately before me ; the *image* of God is said, in the New Testament, to consist in *knowledge*. *Seeing*, says the Apostle to the Colossians, *ye have put off the old man, with his deeds, and put on the new man, which is renewed, in KNOWLEDGE, after the image of him that created him.** In the Old Testament, we are informed that God made man *upright* ;† and, in the New, that the renovation

* Col. iii. 10.

† Eccles. vii. 29.

renovation of our nature, by which we again acquire the similitude of God, is placed in *righteousness*, and *true holiness* ;* that is, in a conformity to the eternal rule of right, which had been prescribed by God, and in the absence of *moral obliquity*.

Indeed, unless either ignorance or deception be imputed to the Creator, (a most horrid supposition !) the powers, with which he, first, endued our nature, must have been adequate to our duty, and to the attainment of the felicity peculiar to it. Our reason, at present, clearly points out, to us, a standard of morality, conformable to our nature, to which we cannot attain, and a happiness infinitely superior to what we can enjoy, in our present state. Either the standard, then, was always too high, and the felicity proposed, at all times, unattainable by man, and, in this case, our Creator has

* Ephes. iv. 24.

has always exacted more than man could ever perform; or man must, some time, or other, have been furnished with *faculties* adequate to the one, and with a *capacity* of attaining the other. The standard of duty, prescribed even by mere moralists, cannot, now, it will be acknowledged, be reached, by any mortal; and the happiness, which is attached to it, must, consequently, be withheld. Either, then, we must reject the obligations of mere *morality* itself, a procedure repugnant to reason, and to the feelings of every good mind, or we must acknowledge that human nature has undergone some degeneration, and perversion of its powers.

Man, before he transgressed, was free from every immoral stain. This stain he contracted by transgression; and, whether after the shock of sin was once given to his nature, it could recover primitive innocence, is, at least, matter of great doubt, and is a point which I shall, in the sequel,

sequel, endeavour to illustrate, according to the measure of my abilities. It is certain, if I may be allowed to employ so distant an analogy, that, among the inferior animals, whole breeds degenerate, and that all the individuals of a succeeding race are affected by the declension of the antecedent generation. Nay, we see, in our own species, diseases, both of body and mind, daily transmitted. This may lead us, in the meantime, to conceive the *fact*, if not the *manner*, of the transmission of *moral* corruption.

As the *image* of God, after which man is said, in the New Testament, to be *renewed*, that is, restored to his primitive state of mind, is, partly, placed in *knowledge*, it has been objected that, at his creation, he was so far from being well acquainted with every thing belonging to his nature and condition, which is all that is asserted, that he seems to have been ridiculously ignorant of what could hardly

have failed to attract his observation. The ground of this objection is, that he was never sensible of his *nakedness*,* till his fall. But, nothing can be more puerile than this objection. Scripture itself furnishes the answer to it, by saying that they were both *naked*, and were not *ashamed*.† The meaning, therefore, is, not that they were ignorant of their not being clothed, but that they were not *ashamed* of this *nudity*. Indeed, it appears to me that this circumstance is mentioned in order to convey, to us, a two-fold signification. The first is, that, as sin hath introduced debility, and sickness of every kind, the use of clothing was not necessary in a state of innocence, perfect health, and purity of mind. The second meaning seems to be allegorical, namely, that, as *shame* is the attendant of guilt, no perception of it whatever could exist before the fall. Nay, I am not sure that

* Gen. iii. 7.

† Gen. ii. 25.

that the whole import of the word *naked*, in the place, now before us, is not *metaphorical*. In the book of Revelation, we find the following passage addressed to the Church of Laodicea:—*Thou knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.** No person ever understood these words, *poor, and blind, and naked*, in a literal sense. But, as, in all languages, these words have a *metaphorical*, as well as a *literal*, meaning, so, in this place, the former is the only meaning that can be assigned to them. In particular, we commonly say that, when any person has committed some glaring fault, or expressed absurdity, *he has laid himself completely open*, and is *bare, and naked*. This seems to me to be the chief sense intended in the passage, when it is said that Adam knew his *nakedness* after his fall. *I was afraid*, says he, because *I was naked, and I hid myself*:

*And God said, who told thee that thou wast naked; hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee, that thou shouldst not eat?**

It is clear that the *eating of the forbidden fruit* could have no effect in conveying, to him, the positive perception of *nakedness*, though it certainly convinced him how *naked*, and *bare* to the sentence of God, his soul had become by his transgression. I have little doubt that, in the passage, above quoted from the Revelation, the word *naked* has a reference to this very passage in the book of Genesis.

As the second branch of resemblance to God, in which man was created, is said to consist in *righteousness*, and *true holiness*, it has been urged, in opposition to this assertion, that man failed on the first temptation—a temptation to gratify only a low, sensual appetite, notwithstanding he was abundantly supplied, not only with all

* Gen. iii. 10.

all the necessaries, but even with every comfort of life. It is, indeed, true that the goodness of the Deity towards our first parents ought to have inspired them with love, reverence, and gratitude, and, in the want of these affections, their offence chiefly consisted. These affections ought to have restrained their immoderate curiosity, with regard to the reasons of the prohibition imposed on them. But, it is, at the same time, never to be forgotten that, however excellent and exalted the nature of man was, in his state of innocence, he was not, and could not be, absolutely perfect; that, however well disposed, he was not impeccable; and, on the supposition of his *fallability*, the trial of his obedience was prescribed. It is, further, to be considered in what light the temptation was presented to him, and, on what side he was assailed by it. This will, always, make a considerable difference in the force of any temptation, and, indeed, in this, its force is principally placed.

If mankind always viewed the objects, presented to their senses, or their imagination, in their proper colours, they could never be seduced from their duty, because it would, then, appear that, in the practice of virtue, many more advantages are to be found, than result from vice. The case is the same, whether we consider the divine law, which has, for its object, the most comprehensive happiness of mankind, or human laws, which respect only the preservation of civil society. The former prescribes those rules which must render man happy through all the stages of his existence. The latter aim at ensuring his comfort and security, as a subject of civil government. Both tend to his real happiness, the one, on its greatest scale, the others in that narrow compass which human enactments embrace. In regard to both, the course of duty is that which ensures, to him, the largest sum of solid and substantial felicity.

In

In this, however, the force of temptation lies, and, by this, all criminals are seduced; that the mind, diverted from the sense of obligation and duty, is exclusively fixed on the advantages and pleasures of transgression. If, in this view, we consider the temptation that assailed our first parents, we shall find that it was of that kind which was most likely to prevail with beings of an elevated, but imperfect mind. According to the Scriptural account, Eve was not tempted merely by the fruit itself, which would have been sufficient for an unbridled appetite, but by its virtue of producing a nearer resemblance to the Deity. *Ye shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.**

* Gen. iii. 5, 6

This was the very species of temptation which had before transformed *Angels* into *Devils*, and occasioned their ruin—*when they were cast down to hell, and delivered into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.** For, the Prophet Isaiah puts, into the mouth of the King of Babylon, whom he compares to Lucifer, and calls by his name, a speech in which the language of that evil spirit is adopted, and of which a part is—*I will ascend above the height of the clouds; I will be like the Most High.*† It is easy to infer, from various passages of Scripture, that inordinate pride, and ambition, were the chief crimes of the apostate angels. In reality, pride is the first exorbitant passion that seizes on the human heart, and is the last that leaves it; and, wherever it exists, in its extreme form, every other species of turpitude will be found. Adam is also assailed on the same side with Eve, only, to
the

* 2 Pet. ii. 4.

† Isaiah xiv. 14.

the intrinsic force of the temptation, his conjugal affection is superadded. It may also be proper to subjoin that, the prohibition being merely of a *positive* nature, the reason of which they understood not, they might be the more easily induced to disobey it, as they could have no suspicion of the deceitful purpose for which the temptation was placed before them ; and, when they were informed of the remarkable virtue of the forbidden fruit to increase their *knowledge*, they might be disposed to believe that, perhaps, in this manner, God communicated to them the removal of the prohibition.* At least, it is conceivable that some consideration of this kind might facilitate their fall. For, it is still characteristical of human nature readily to believe what is wished to be true.

From

* See *Archbishop King's Sermon on the Fall of Man*, subjoined to his *Essay on the Origin of Evil*.

From this Scriptural account of the *origin of moral evil*, nothing appears to militate against the *original excellence* of man's faculties, as fully adequate to the discharge of his duty. Of Adam's *knowledge* we have evidence in his giving appropriate *names** to all the animals, which implies an acquaintance with their different natures; and the power, which he received, moderately to use, and dispose of them,† seems to require a *knowledge* of their qualities. If he possessed such knowledge in *physical* matters, much more reason have we to suppose that his understanding was sufficiently clear and accurate, with regard to his duty, in his relation to God, to the companion whom God had given him, and to himself.

It is proper to remark that the situation of the first human pair, in respect to the *acquisition of knowledge*, must have been

* Gen. ii. 19, 20.

† Gen. i. 28.

been essentially different from that of their posterity. We acquire almost every species of information by our own experience, or by the instruction of others. The first pair, created, as they must have been, with the full vigour of their faculties, since they had no progenitors to rear and educate them, must have received, immediately from God, the *knowledge* necessary to their state, and have been directed, by him, in regard to the right application of their powers. Derived, therefore, from this source, their information must have been as ample and exact, as their nature and circumstances could admit. A little reflection will, therefore, convince us that all their *moral* and *intellectual* faculties must, before their fall, have been in a more upright and perfect condition, than has ever belonged to any of their posterity, or belonged even to themselves, after their transgression.

Thus,

Thus, it appears that the original state of man was the most perfectly adapted to the rank which he was designed to hold in the scale of being, and that his powers and faculties, both *intellectual* and *moral*, were fully adequate to his duty, and to the attainment of the happiness assigned to his nature. Scripture informs us also, that his external circumstances were completely suited to such a state of internal capacities. He was placed in a *Paradise*, planned and arranged by the Author of order and beauty, and abundantly provided with whatever was necessary for nourishment, or productive of enjoyment to uncorrupted sense. He was furnished with appetites sufficiently strong to give relish to these enjoyments, without excess, and the evils which it produces. He was a stranger to guilt, and remorse, unconscious, and unsuspicuous of bad intention; desirous and capable of *knowledge*, having the works of God for his subject, and their Author for his instructor.

Formed

Formed for society, he was blessed with a companion of his own rank and dignity, and admitted into communion with his heavenly Father, whom he adored and loved, and could, without presumption, consider as his protector, and friend. For, each of the divine attributes was, to man, a pledge of God's favour, and of his own felicity, while he retained his innocence. Thus, between *Man*, and his *Creator*, complete conformity and union existed. *Man* was, in every respect, fitted to fill the station allotted him in the order of being, and, till he perverted his powers, he moved in harmony with the whole creation by which he was surrounded. God saw the last of his works, as well as those which preceded in the climax of terrestrial existence, to be *very good*, and bestowed, on it, *his blessing*.*

So perfectly conformable to the dictates of unadulterated nature, and to the voice
of

* Gen. i. 28, 31.

of sober reason, is the description of the condition of our first parents, as Scripture hath delivered it, that, if any person of correct judgment will, in a moment of serious reflection, figure, to himself, a picture of the highest terrestrial felicity, his fancy will call up images of a character similar to the scene of Eden! He will not place that happiness, which he desires, either for himself, or for those who are dearest to him, in the splendor of opulence, in the unceasing agitation of worldly business, in the mad schemes of ambition, in the vain and fluttering pursuits of fame, in the sordid accumulation of wealth, or in the feverish and enervating gusts of sensual pleasure. He will imagine some delightful retirement from the folly and profligacy of the world, where he may improve and exercise his faculties, without fatiguing them, where he may enjoy all the conveniences, but not the pernicious luxuries, of life, where he may purchase the relish of delight, and

and the refection of repose, by moderate exercise, where he may freely participate in all the innocent pleasures of virtuous society, and, above all, in the dear comforts of domestic happiness, and the sublime joys of rational devotion! While he views the follies of mankind with pity, he will wish to draw freely from the fountain of genuine wisdom, to form his opinions according to the standard of truth, and to express them without fear, or reserve. While he beholds the incorrigible depravity which desolates the habitations of men, he will sigh to be placed beyond its reach, and to be enabled to regulate his own actions by the eternal rule of rectitude which is impressed on his heart, unseduced by the temptations, unintimidated by the threats, unclogged by the impediments, unrestrained by the artificial ties, of a corrupt and corrupting world. Such a situation, such a state of felicity, the speculative, enlightened, and generous mind delights to imagine to itself.

itself. Such was, in a great measure, and as far as the peculiarity of their circumstances would admit, that in which the sacred Scriptures represent our first parents to have been placed.

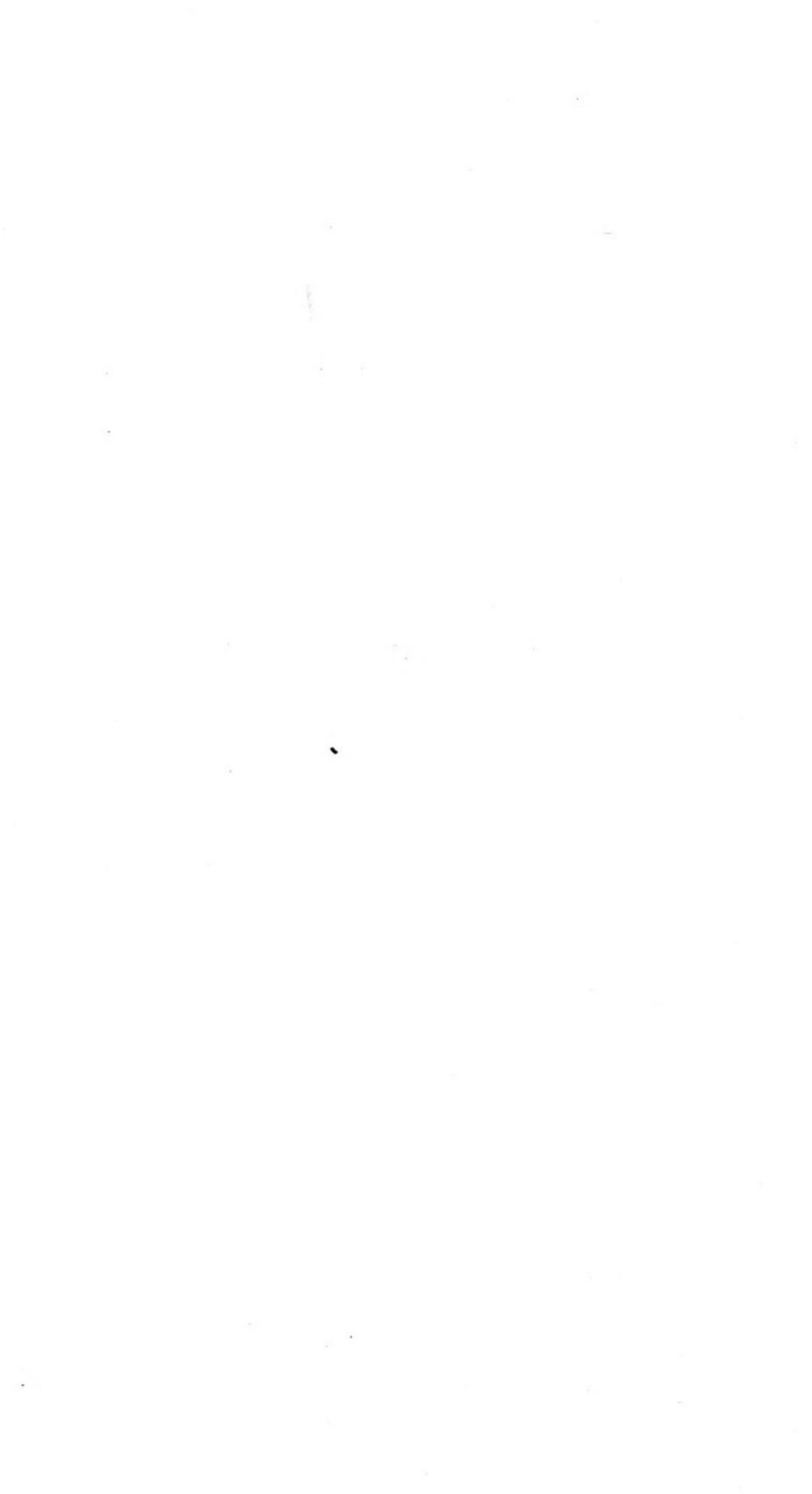
Hence, Milton's description of Eden, and of the felicity of our first parents, before they were expelled from it, possesses such peculiar power over the heart, delights the imagination, and affords gratification to all the sweetest feelings of our nature. I frankly confess that this part of *Paradise Lost* was always most enchanting to me, and that my taste is so bad, as to prefer it to the sublimity of Satan's *most diabolical character*.

The felicity of Eden the first human pair forfeited by their transgression, and that transgression introduced sin into the world, with all its fatal consequences. It

“*Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden.*” ————— MILTON.

I shall,

I shall, in the following chapter, make some short observations on the sense in which it appears to me that the transgression of our first parents is to be understood, as the source of the present depraved and sinful state of human nature.



CHAPTER III.

The light, in which the doctrine of Scripture, concerning the transmission of sin from the first human pair, appears to be most consonant to reason, and the nature of things.

1st; In our first parents, human nature received a perversion from its original rectitude. This nature, as it became by their fall, has been transmitted, from them, to all their posterity. It was, therefore, transmitted in a corrupted state. That our nature is corrupted is matter of experience. All have sinned, sin daily, and

are, thence, justly exposed to the penalties of transgression. Struck with this melancholy truth, we are led, by curiosity, to ascertain the *cause* of it. Scripture informs us that this cause is to be found in the successive transgression of Eve, and of Adam. But, not satisfied with this declaration, men are, further, desirous of knowing the *manner* in which this fatal disorder took place, and how the corruption, which the first pair contracted, can be transmitted to their posterity. The answer to this inquiry is simple; that we often know *facts*, with certainty, for which we cannot account; that, since every human being has sinned, he is justly obnoxious to punishment; and that every person sins *voluntarily*, or *with the consent of his own mind*, and not by *external compulsion*. For, evil propensities, inclinations, and habits, which constitute the essence of *sin*, are beyond the reach of external power, or violence. No man, therefore, can complain of the justice

tice of God in subjecting him to punishment, and, whatever was the ultimate cause of the depravity of human nature, it is *depraved*, and, being so, cannot be entitled to the advantages and the rewards of innocence.

2dly; It still remains to be considered, whether the Deity, after the first introduction of *moral corruption* into human nature, could restore it to purity, without the *miracle* of a new creation—a *miracle*, which must, perhaps, have been repeated, as often as sinful action disordered the condition of any human mind. It is an undoubted fact that there is an intimate connexion between the *soul* and the *body*, and that they mutually affect each other. The sin of our first parents immediately affected them with *shame*, and *terror*, which must have agitated their corporal frame, and, thus, have disordered it in a manner unknown to it before. Let physicians declare the influence which body and

mind have reciprocally on each other. They will acknowledge that many bodily distempers originate in a disordered state of the mind, particularly those of a hypochondriac nature; and it is notorious that a feeble state of the nerves has an astonishing effect on all the faculties of the mind. These *facts* are certain, although to account for them surpasses human ability.*

Now, from our first parents, their posterity have successively derived their bodies, in ordinary generation; and we know that diseases of every kind, and *death*, speedily ravaged the earth, that the human constitution was gradually enfeebled, and that the age of man was prodigiously contracted.

Does

* See a very ingenious Oration, entitled *Hieronymi Gaubii Sermo Academicus de Regimine Mentis quod medicorum est, habitus, 8vo. Februarii, an. MDCCXLVII, cum Magistratu Academico abiit.—Lugduni Batavorum.*

Does not even the fact itself of the contraction of human life, and of the introduction of every species of disease, seem to indicate a surprising change in the human constitution? Soon after the flood, the life of man was shortened to its present period. In Noah's family, longevity, compared with the utmost extent of human life, as it, now, exists, was, indeed, for some time, preserved. But, it was, soon after, reduced to its present extension. It is very doubtful, whether any thing, short of a *miracle*, could extend the days of man much beyond the utmost verge which they are, now, capable of attaining.

It seems sufficiently clear that a corporal frame, so debilitated, and impaired, in all its energies, could no longer be a fit receptacle for a pure, spotless, and elevated soul. Or, if we suppose such to become its inhabitant, this must speedily be affected by such a body, and participate

in its infirmity. Indeed, to the connexion of *spirit* with *matter*, some of the ancient philosophers ascribed all the evil propensities of the former; nor can it be doubted that nothing has a more powerful influence to weaken and degrade our minds, than the dominion of sense and appetite.

Besides, it is to be considered that all our perceptions are conveyed, to the mind, by means of corporal organs. If these last are impaired and shattered, the ideas, transmitted by them, must lose something of their correctness, or vigour. If the senses subdue and obscure our reason, the mind becomes enslaved, and the superior powers and energies of the soul are deprived both of their native force, and of their legitimate extent. Although it is certain that *spirit* and *matter* are distinct and uninterchangeable substances, we know that, as has been, already, observed, they have a powerful influence on each other;

other; and, though the soul must exist in a state of separation from the body, we can, at present, form, to ourselves, no clear conception of the operations of a disembodied *spirit*. Meanwhile, it cannot be denied that the agitations of the mind, of which the most severe and overwhelming are those which are occasioned by *guilt* and *remorse*, affect and distress the whole corporal system; and, reciprocally, the strong affections of the body have an equal influence on the mind. Hence, the guilt of our first parents must have impaired their corporal powers, and these, thus debilitated, being transmitted, by traduction, to their posterity, the purity and excellence of the human mind must have been proportionably reduced in all. Disease, in every form, soon extended its ravages over the earth, and death more rapidly approached the habitations of men. That disease has, in many instances, a most unhappy effect on the temper and disposition, and a tendency to

to produce several vices, cannot be questioned. The study of physic might, therefore, be of great use to the *moral Philosopher*, or the *Divine*, and the knowledge of the *Science of mind* might be equally useful to the Physician. These, however, are mere conjectures, with regard to the *manner* of the transmission of corruption to the whole human race, through all succeeding generations, from their first parents. As conjectures, I propose them to the reader.

I propose it not, however, as *conjecture*, but as matter of certainty, that, after our first parents had incurred corruption by the abuse of their liberty, they became incapable of delivering, to their children, that *elevation* of precept, and, still more, of setting, before them, that *purity* of example, which, before their fall, they were able to do. Now, at this very day, it is the union of *precept*, and of *example*, that produces the greatest moral effect.

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When *precepts* are incorrect, and *examples* defective, the conduct of those, to whom the former are delivered, and the latter are proposed, must unavoidably partake of this *moral* deficiency. But, this has been the case with all the generations of men, who have succeeded the first human pair. The evil has not only existed without variation, but has, in its progress, been accumulating strength. To this melancholy truth every *moral instructor* can bear testimony. Even after parents, or guardians, have resolved to place their children, or wards, under that tuition which they themselves acknowledge to be most salutary, and desirable, they are frequently counteracting the instructor's doctrine, and frustrating its success. They often exhibit the counterpart of Penelope's web, and undo, in darkness, what he has executed in the light of day. Their foolish maxims, and vicious example, give the lie to all that he has taught, or practised. Ye wise instructors in every part
of

of the world! raise your voices in confirmation of this dismal truth. Ye foolish, yet proud, parents, or guardians! hide your heads, on its annunciation. In this manner, *original sin* possesses a wide, an increasing, and a fatal range—which the renovating power of God only can circumscribe, and reduce.

As far as relates to the *wisdom* and *goodness* of the Deity, with the defence of which I am, at present, chiefly concerned, our first parents may fairly be considered as representing their whole posterity, and God, as justly condemning all mankind, in the persons of the first transgressors. They, and every human being, who should afford perfect obedience to the divine law, were entitled to the benefits and privileges of innocence. *With God, one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.** He saw, at once, all the successive

* 2 Pet. iii. 8.

cessive generations of men fallen, corrupt, and incapable of perfect obedience, from the moment that their first progenitors sinned, and pronounced them all under condemnation. Justly, therefore, was the sin of their first parents imputed to them, from that moment, because, although they had not, yet, actually committed sin, they would certainly commit it, and, from the first transgression, derived an incapacity of perfect obedience. From whatever source this corruption was derived, it could not be viewed, as has been, already, observed, in the same light with purity and innocence, or receive, from God, the same rewards. If it was increased and swelled by a series of profligacy and wickedness, obstinate, incorrigible, and desperate, it justly incurred irretrievable misery. But, God's *clemency* was to be exercised, towards mankind, to its full extent, in due time, and his *infinite wisdom* was displayed in devising the plan of the restoration of all who were capable

capable of it, by his grace, through Jesus Christ. In order, however, to render this plan effectual, it was necessary that sinners should be convinced of the necessity of a Saviour, not only by feeling and acknowledging the magnitude of their *actual* transgressions, but by being persuaded of the *inherent corruption of the species*.

It may, now, be proper to offer some short observations on the intervention of the *Serpent*, in the *fall of man*.

There is hardly any subject which has occasioned more difficulty to interpreters of Scripture, or with respect to which there has been a greater diversity of opinions; nor have I any hesitation to acknowledge that it is one of great difficulty to the rational Divine, and, after all that has been, or, perhaps, can be said upon it, must remain shaded with considerable obscurity. I shall briefly state the principal opinions which have been delivered

on

on this subject.—*1st*; Many of the ancient Jews understood this passage literally, and supposed that the *Serpent* actually addressed Eve, having been used, as an organ, by the *Devil*, in the same manner as Balaam's ass was permitted to address him.* This literal signification is also adopted by Archbishop King, in his *Sermon on the Fall of Man*, which I have already quoted. *2dly*; Others, and, particularly, Abarbanel, have been of opinion that there was no interchange of discourse between the *Serpent* and *Eve*, but that the *Serpent*, having ascended the tree, and eaten the forbidden fruit, without detriment, Eve was tempted, by intemperate curiosity, also to eat of it, and that the conversation, which is stated to have passed between the parties, on this occasion, is merely a parabolical representation, after the Oriental manner, or that of Æsop, and other fabulists, in order to represent

* Num. xxii. 28. 30.

represent the direful effects of boundless curiosity, and precipitate disobedience. *3dly*; Others, again, have considered the whole narration, in this passage, as a mere allegory, and that the intervention of the *Serpent* is employed, on different accounts; namely, to represent the *deceitfulness of sin*; to convince man of the subtlety and malignity of the Devil; and to inspire an abhorrence of *idolatry*. The cunning of that animal was proverbial among the ancients, and several instances of it, whether imaginary or true, have been produced by various authors. This reptile was worshipped in different countries; and the *Asp*, in particular, was consecrated among the Egyptians. That the *Serpent* is considered, in the New Testament, as a type and emblem of the Devil, is evident from the following passages.—*The Devil (says our Saviour) was a murderer from the beginning, and he abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him.* The great dragon*

was

* John viii. 44.

was cast out, that old Serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old Serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years.† And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.‡ Through envy of the Devil came death into the world; and they that do hold of his side do find it.§*

I pretend not positively to assert which of these, or of other opinions, on the same subject, is to be embraced. In every case, where there is a considerable degree of obscurity, an ingenuous confession of ignorance is the safest procedure. This, at least, appears evident, from the whole of this narrative, that, in our first parents, sin and moral perversion commenced, and

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that

* Revel. xii. 9.

† Revel. xx. 2.

‡ Rom. xvi. 20.

§ Wisdom of Solomon, ii. 24.

that, from this source, innumerable evils have flowed to them, and their posterity. It is undoubted that the human race is, and has been, corrupt, almost from the beginning of the world, and that no perfect purity, except in Jesus Christ, can be found after the fall. But, the peculiar *manner* in which transgression was introduced into the world, and the exact circumstances by which this introduction was accompanied, they only, to whom this catastrophe happened, could unfold, since Revelation has not *explicitly* and positively informed us.* At any rate, I trust that the doctrine of *original sin*, when properly understood, which has so often been rendered the subject of indecent ridicule, even by some Divines, is cleared from all absurdity, rendered equally consonant to reason, and to Scripture, and is productive

* See *Clericus* (le Clerc) in his *Note on Gen. iii. 1.* and *Poli Synopsis ad locum.*

tive of moral instruction, and of extensive application. This last will be still more apparent from the observations which the next chapter will contain.

CHAPTER IV.

*Of the moral improvement of the Original
Corruption of Man.*

I HAVE, already, had occasion to observe that God, intending to create such a world, as we inhabit, designed man to be a *free agent*, subject to a *law*, and capable of attaining happiness by obeying it. He also designed that promiscuous distribution of *good* and *evil*, which we behold, those temptations by which we are surrounded, and those opportunities of making a virtuous, or a vicious choice, which are constantly presented to us. In order

to direct us, in this state of trial, he endued us with *reason*, which enables us to discover truth, and to trace the consequences of conduct, as productive of pleasure or pain, of happiness or misery. He has also impressed, on every human heart, a *moral principle*, in consequence of which we perceive, in sentiments, opinions, and actions, a propriety, and an excellence, or a meanness, and turpitude; and *feel* an obligation to honour our Creator, to practise justice and beneficence towards mankind, and to observe moderation in our *desires* and affections, and temperance in our enjoyments. In conformity to these general principles, founded in observation and experience, the following instructions are to be derived from the doctrine of Scripture on the subject now under discussion.

1st; Holy Scripture informs us that God not only gave, to the first human pair, a law adapted to their nature, and circumstances;

circumstances ; but also imposed, on them, a particular and *positive* prohibition to abstain from the fruit of *one tree* in the garden of Eden. This prohibition was, in itself, both just and salutary, as it tended to convince them that man was not to consider himself as absolute proprietor of the fruits of the earth, but as dependent on his Creator, and bound, from respect to him, to acknowledge that dependence by submitting to some restraint. It is also proper to remark that this trial was almost the only one which was suited to the peculiar situation of our first parents. It was a trial of their obedience to God, and of their self-command. No social virtue of any great extent could be exercised and proved before the establishment of more extensive society. But, this was also a trial of *social virtue*. For, it is certain that, if I may be allowed the expression, no *virtue* or *vice* whatever can remain *insulated* and *solitary*. Every virtue, of whatever description, qualifies

us for the discharge of every duty. Every vice impairs our capacity of virtuous exertion of every kind. Besides, there is a communicative propensity in every *moral*, or *immoral* quality. Vice, in particular, is cruelly prompted to communicate her contagion, *to speak perverse things, and to draw away disciples after her.** *As a roaring lion, she walketh about, seeking whom she may devour.*† Accordingly, Eve, after her transgression, was no longer qualified to be a companion to Adam, if he had continued innocent; and she immediately seduced him, as she herself had been seduced by the great enemy of God and man. Thus, the prohibition, delivered to our first parents, was adapted to be a test of their duty to God, to themselves, and to each other. It is to be observed also that the same sense of obligation, which would have led to obedience in this instance, would also have prevented

* Acts xx. 30.

† 1 Pet. v. 8.

vented the infraction of every other *moral law*. So that this trial may justly be considered as a fair proof of every principle by which a human being ought to be governed.

2dly; Scripture also informs us that our first parents, imagining that they would obtain exaltation and happiness by a licentious infringement of the divine precept, were tempted to disobedience, and that this act of disobedience, proceeding from a rebellious sense of independence, was considered as a complete abjuration of allegiance to the Deity. In fact, resistance to *the will of God* is the source of all impious and immoral conduct.

3dly; Scripture declares that Adam, and Eve, were, as a punishment for this transgression, driven from the place of delight and security which God had assigned them; that they became obnoxious

ious to many wants and distresses ; that they experienced how feeble and miserable man is, when deprived of the protection of God ; and that, having forfeited their title to life, that is, to the reward of piety and innocence, they were subjected to *death*, the punishment of transgression. God had, nevertheless, compassion on them, when they were humbled under the conviction of sin, and abandoned them not to despair, with respect either to a present life, or to an eternal existence.

4thly ; The same *moral law*, which God prescribed, to our first parents, requiring the practice of *righteousness*, he has prescribed to all mankind. The obligation of fearing, honouring, and worshipping our Creator still remains entire, although the particular mode of manifesting our piety must vary according to times, and circumstances. The sanction of the law of nature still subsists, and will subsist always, since happiness is the reward
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of obedience ; and misery, of one kind or other, is the punishment of transgression. The same temptation, which seduced the first of the human race, still seduces every sinner. On the one hand, inordinate passions prompt men to iniquity and excess, and, on the other, a false spirit of independence impels them to reject restraint. In this light, Adam was the representative and type of all transgressors who have succeeded him. The sentence, pronounced, on him, is executed on all his descendants, according to the degree in which they participate in his rebellion.

5thly; History convinces us that Adam's posterity have imitated his disobedience, and, like him, have yielded to the seduction of vice. For, although, as has been observed in the last Book, some seeds of virtue have always remained in the human heart, and, in some instances, produced most excellent fruit ; yet, no man, since

since the fall, has been blameless, and exempt from sin. All are chargeable with infirmities, faults, and vices, and the generality of men are grossly depraved. Thus, the contagion of vice has infected the whole mass of mankind, though the degrees and forms of corruption have been different, in different ages, and countries.

6thly; In consequence of this melancholy and lamentable depravation, every species of misery has been multiplied in the earth. Hence, proceed *quarrels, enmities, violent animosities, disorder, confusion, private antipathies, public convulsions, bloody and desolating wars, hosts of diseases, atrocious crimes, horrid remorse, and almost all the evils*, which afflict degraded, yet, proud humanity. Meanwhile, the light of the mind is obscured, its peace destroyed, its right direction removed. The sinner *knows* that he has exposed himself to the wrath of God, has deprived himself of his grace,

grace, favour, and protection, and has forfeited every *right* to a happy immortality.

7thly; As Adam received assurances of the divine clemency, his posterity have still more ample ground to entertain the same joyous expectation. The Deity has, at all times, shewn himself merciful to humble and penitent sinners, or, in other words, manifested his *divine nature*. In this respect, the Gospel has given complete and unbounded cause of comfort, and fulfilled the promise obscurely made to our first parents. Thus, in the person of *Adam*, it may be justly said that the whole human race was represented, and that he was an image and type of the common condition of humanity, of its natural state, of its degeneracy, of its misery, and of the remedies applied, to all these, by the *wisdom* and *goodness* of its *almighty Parent*.

This

This account of the *Fall* of man is calculated to impress us with a deep sense of guilt and misery, and to induce us to deplore the prevalence of vice, humble ourselves before God, and distrust our own *wisdom* and *power*. The discovery of the *evil* should dispose men to seek and apply the remedy, by good laws, by virtuous precepts and examples, by the encouragement of *moral* worth, by the restraint of depravity; above all, by the study of religion, and, by the application of the means of recovery provided by the Gospel.

The history of the Fall, thus considered and applied, is natural, philosophical, or, in other words, rational, and fertile of high instruction. It is to be regretted that, while many, on the one hand, reject every doctrine of Scripture which is not exactly conformable to their *metaphysical notions*, others are apt to consider, as impious, every attempt to examine,

mine, by the test of sound reason, any opinion, which, without inquiry, they themselves have ascribed to Revelation. Both are in extremes, and, perhaps, equally removed from truth. Both are *dogmatical*, and, under different appearances, actuated by the same motives.



CHAPTER V.

*Of the adventitious sources of Corruption, and
of the means which the Christian Revela-
tion has provided for the cure of all Moral
Evil.*

THE Gospel, while it unfolds the original corruption of our nature, also points out the other causes by which that corruption is increased, and perpetuated.

1st ; One of these is man's *strong attachment to the sensual objects* which surround him, and unavoidably occupy much

of his attention. Hence, chained to carnal and terrestrial pursuits, he finds great difficulty in rising to objects extending beyond the verge of this world, and adapted to his immaterial and immortal part. Thus, is formed, what the Apostle Paul calls, by a beautiful figure, the *natural*, or *animal* man who is the slave of sense and appetite, destitute of all conception and relish of divine things, living after the *flesh*, and not after the *spirit*, and agitated by every passion which lays hold of the heart, uninfluenced by the fear of God.

How prevalent this character is, must be evident to every person of the smallest observation. These Scriptural expressions are derided by ignorant and stupid minds, as destitute of philosophical and historical information, as of the knowledge of Christianity. But, the doctrine, which is, here, inculcated, was familiar to the sages of antiquity. They considered subjugation

jugation to *matter*, and *sense*; as one of the chief causes of man's degradation and misery, and were of opinion that the first step to the elevation of human nature was emancipation from this thraldom. Modern profligates are, in fact, much more contemptible and base, than those of the same description in Heathen times. For, these last pretended not to sneer at the precepts of Philosophy, but stood abashed in her venerable presence. Christianity delivers doctrines, and discloses views infinitely more certain and extensive than Philosophy could ever discover. These, the foolish and ignorant men, just now mentioned, bearing the Christian name, pretend, however, to despise. On the same ground, a mere Sensualist, a Debauchee, or an Epicure, might affect to contemn the discoveries of a Newton, or a Herschel. Such persons understand neither *Philosophy*, nor *Christianity*; and an *Esquimaux* might pronounce his opinion with equal justice.

2dly; Another great source of corruption is *Pride*, and that *Self-love* which spurns control, renders men deaf to admonition, and induces them rather to disguise, than to amend, their faults. Reason is, thus, often degraded to become the advocate and defender of folly and vice, and employed to varnish, palliate, and excuse them.

3dly; *Popular opinion*, and the practice of the world, unjust in its judgments, false in its maxims, and corrupt in its conduct, acquire, over the heart, uncontrolled dominion; often entirely pervert moral sentiment, condemn what is right, applaud what is wrong, or, at least, condemn and applaud, without a just estimate, or standard of morality.

In order to correct these sources of corruption, and of the evils which it produces, the Gospel sets, before us, the comparative insignificance of sensual pleasures,

sures, and terrestrial enjoyments, and shews them to be mean, contemptible, and fleeting. With these it contrasts others of a contrary description, which are solid in their nature, commensurate to the faculties of man, exquisite in their relish, and eternal in their duration. These it frequently brings before the mind, and describes in language strongly adapted to fix attention, and to excite desire. In fact, as long as the soul is bent towards the earth, and the heart devoted to mean and degrading objects, and fascinated by false appearances of happiness, man must inevitably be exposed to every temptation of vice, and be the sport of every irregular passion. The soul must, therefore, be exalted and purified, and, as it were, translated into another region, where, breathing a purer air, and contemplating objects adapted to its nobler faculties, and worthy of its pursuit, it will be disengaged from those propensities and desires

which are connected with the gross and animal part of our nature.

Further; the human heart being swelled with *Pride*, and strongly biassed by its own selfish and corrupt opinions, the Gospel also applies its correctives to this *evil*, so deeply rooted in the human frame. For this purpose, the discipline of Christ humbles us under a deep sense of our guilt and misery, and warns us of our danger. It requires us to *deny ourselves, and to take up our cross.** This, by no means, implies that we are to abjure all self-love, and to relinquish all enjoyment. But, *self-love* must be so moderated, as to prevent its encroaching on the claims of *justice* and *benevolence*, and so directed, as to render it subservient to our true felicity. In order to produce this desirable result, we are required, by our religion, to distrust our selfish passions,

* Luke ix. 23.

sions, and our favourite prejudices, to abandon our erroneous judgments, and to place ourselves, through all the paths of life, under the direction of a guide and leader, completely qualified for this office, and actuated by the most sincere and constant regard for our safety, our comfort, and our happiness.

In this respect, the language of our religion is similar to that which we ourselves should hold to a person who had mismanaged some important affair.— “Never implicitly trust your own judgment, in such matters; but, consult a faithful and wise friend, whose advice you may procure; and take care to follow it.” Or, in regard to this part of the remedies offered by the Gospel, we may compare man’s situation to that of a servant who promises to relinquish his own separate pursuits, and to obey his master, in every thing relative to his service. In both these lights, feeble and

corrupt man is exhorted, in the New Testament not *to serve two masters*,* but, to place himself under the direction of his great *Master*, and *Lord*, Jesus Christ, who hath not only delivered, to him, the most salutary instructions, but hath also set, before him, the most perfect example. By complying with this exhortation, the Christian becomes, in this, as in so many other respects, the opposite of the *carnally-minded* who blindly follow their own irregular passions, and of the votaries of earthly enjoyment who are entirely governed by the fluttering opinions of the world. The Gospel also compares the present feeble and degenerate state of man to that of a Patient† who, in order to recover his health, is bound to follow the prescriptions of a skilful Physician, and represents Christ as the great Physician of Souls.

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* Matt. vi. 24.

† Matt. ix. 12.

The grand principle of a Christian, therefore, is to submit, to God, without reserve, to adhere to his Saviour with undivided affection, and to take the divine will, and command, as the constant rule of his conduct. This is, in reality, the only means of bringing him into the course which he ought to hold. Divesting himself of perverted notions, produced in the rank soil of corruption, he acquires the wisdom *which cometh from above*,* and, abandoning the unsatisfactory and pernicious pursuits to which the world is devoted, he finds that the way, which this celestial wisdom points out, is the *way of pleasantness, and that all its paths are peace.*† By this short and simple method, requiring nothing more, on the part of man, than a meek and docile mind, the ignorant, as well as the learned, the mean, as well as the exalted, may be preserved from the temptations and transgressions, into

* James iii. 17,

† Prov. iii. 17.

into which the generality, too fondly attached to their own rash opinions, or adopting the judgment and example of folly and corruption, are so apt to fall.

Meanwhile, the Gospel affords complete assurance of the pardon of sin to all the sincerely penitent, in consequence of the atonement of Christ, and, thus, removes those dismal apprehensions which the consciousness of guilt is apt to inspire. It further assures all those, who love God, and endeavour to obey him, of his unceasing protection and favour, and declares that *all things work together for their good* ;* *that none shall harm those who are followers of that which is good* ;† and *that the light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh, for real Christians, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory* ;‡ together with many other passages to the same purpose.

The

* Rom. viii. 28. † 1 Pet. iii. 13. ‡ 2 Cor. iv. 17.

The sages of antiquity were of opinion that no man could attain to high degrees of excellence without divine aid.* This was, with them, mere opinion, and they possessed no assurance of such support, even in the most trying and arduous situations. But, the Gospel positively assures us, that God will give the *holy Spirit to them that ask him,*† *to guide them into all truth,*‡ *to shed abroad the love of God in their hearts,*§ *to inspire them with love, joy, peace,*

long-suffering,

* *Nemo vir magnus sine aliquo afflatus divino unquam fuit.** —Cicero *de Nat. Deor.* lib. ii. cap. 66. The same sentiment is frequent in *Plato*, *Seneca*, *Marcus Antoninus*, and *Epictetus*. The following is a short passage of Antoninus.—‘Ωσε ‘όσον επὶ τοῖς Θεοῖς, καὶ ταῖς εκείθεν διαδύσεσσι, καὶ σολλήψεσι, καὶ επινοίαις, μηδὲν κωλυεῖν, ηδη κατὰ Φυσιν ζῆν με, οὐδὲ απολειπεσθαι τι τατε πάρε τὴν ἐμὴν ἀντιάν, καὶ παρὰ το μη διατηρεῖν τὰς ἐκ τῶν θεῶν ὑπονομίες, καὶ μονογάχη διδασκαλίας, Lib. i. 17.†

† Luke xi. 13.

‡ John xvi. 13.

§ Rom. v. 6.

* No great man ever existed without some divine impulse.

† “ As far as relates to the Gods, and the suggestions, aids, and inspirations which proceed from them, nothing prevents my living according to nature, unless I myself am in fault by not observing the admonitions, and almost the instructions of the Gods.”

long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, and to bear witness with their spirits that they are the children of God.†*

This doctrine is perfectly conformable to sound reason, and to all the natural desires of the human heart. These point to support from the Creator of the soul, and pant for communication with him. The former dictate that if we continually depend, on God, for the continuance and nourishment of our bodies, much more must we derive, from him, the life, the sustenance, and vigour of the soul, the nobler part of man.

In fine, the Gospel proposes the strongest motives to virtuous conduct, and, consequently, the most powerful means of remedying *moral evil*, and all its dreadful effects. It hath *brought life and immortality*.

* Gal. v. 22, 23.

† Rom. viii. 16.

*immortality to light.** It assures us, on the veracity of God himself, that, after the dissolution of the body, an eternal state for the soul is to succeed, and that our conduct in this life must determine our future condition, in consistence with the plan of the Gospel for the restoration of man. The habits, which are acquired, here below, are those which, when the period of trial is past, will remain with us for ever; and habits of virtuous affection and conduct are indispensably necessary to prepare us for a state of consummate and endless felicity.

It is true that, in describing future happiness, or misery, holy Scripture, accommodating itself to human conceptions, by means of which only it could be understood by men, employs such figures, as are most adapted to excite admiration and desire, or to strike with terror and abhorrence.

* 2 Tim. i. 10.

abhorrence. Hence, it represents future felicity under the several figures of *an unfading treasure* ;* of *an incorruptible inheritance* ;† of a *delicious banquet* ;‡ of a *precious pearl* ;§ of a *rich prize* ;|| of a *crown of glory, that fadeth not away* ;¶ of a *kingdom that cannot be moved* ;** and under various shades and representations of the same figurative language.

That these expressions, as far as relates to the definite nature of future felicity, are purely *figurative*, and that, therefore, they are intended only to excite the highest possible ideas of its excellence, is evident from the figures being taken from present objects of which some are not appropriated to our most exalted faculties. Besides, Scripture declares that *flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God* ;†† that those, who are admitted to it,

* Matt. vi. 20. † 1 Pet. i. 4. ‡ Matt. xx. 1.

§ Matt. xiii. 45. || Phil. iii. 14. ¶ 1 Pet. v. 4.

** Heb. xii. 28. †† 1 Cor. xv. 50.

it, must *become as the Angels of God* ;* and that, though our bodies shall be restored to us, yet, they will be so far transformed, as to be rendered, in some sense, *spiritual*, and no longer subject to those wants and distresses which, at present, so much engross our attention, and employ our care. These considerations naturally lead us to conceive this boundless felicity, represented, to us, by these images, as consisting in the complete, unallayed, and endless enjoyment of all those objects which, by gratifying the most elevated faculties of the soul, afford the purest and most exalted satisfactions. Hence, we may consider the happiness of a future life, as comprehending the perfection of *intellectual, moral, social, and religious* enjoyments, which the smallest consideration of the capacities of the human soul must evince to be the highest and most durable of which it is susceptible. Accordingly

* Matt. xvii. 30,

cordingly, we are informed that the blessed shall be admitted into intimate communion with God, shall *see him as he is*,* and shall enjoy the society of *an innumerable company of Angels, and of God the Judge of all, and of the Spirits of just men made perfect, and of Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant.*†

It is certain that, if the remedies for *moral corruption* which the Gospel provides, were diligently and prudently applied, from the first dawn of reason, their salutary effects, even in this life, would be incalculable. Man would, indeed, be *born again*, and become a *new creature*, and the effects of this blessed renovation would be spread over the whole compass of society. But, *corruption* is continually resisting these remedies, and is fired with an insatiable desire of *propagating her kind.*

As

* 1 John iii. 2.

† Heb. xi. 22, 23, 24.

As man is influenced by fear, as well as by hope, and, perhaps, even more by the former than by the latter, the Christian Revelation also most powerfully touches this spring of our constitution, and describes future punishments by such figures as have the strongest effect in exciting our fears, and in inducing us to abandon vice with horror.—Such as *outer darkness, where shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth* ;* *a furnace of fire* ;† *a lake of fire, burning with brimstone* ;‡ *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish* ;§ *everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power* ;|| *judgment, and fiery indignation to devour the adversaries of God.* ¶

Some of these descriptions are plainly figurative. But, others, it is apprehended, are more strict and literal, particularly

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that

* Matt. viii. 12. † Matt. xiii. 42. ‡ Rev. xix. 20.

§ Rom. ii. 8, 9. || 2 Thess. i. 9. ¶ Heb. x. 27.

that of *everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power.** This, besides the most grievous remorse of conscience, clearly includes the total loss of the divine favour, banishment from the mansions of the blessed, and the privation of the most exalted honours and enjoyments of human nature. These, if any person can contemplate without horror, he must be lost to every rational and generous consideration, and almost immersed, already, in a state of perdition.

It has been maintained, by some, that these punishments, however great, consist entirely in the *natural*, and *necessary* consequences of vice; such as remorse of conscience, and a total incapacity of nobler enjoyments, without any *positive* infliction, on the part of God. But, if this were the case, no adequate sanction would be

* 2 Thess. i. 9.

be provided for his laws; and those, who were the most remorseless and abominable transgressors, would undergo the smallest degree of punishment. Those, who have made the most abandoned progress in wickedness, are often subject to the feeblest stings of conscience, which they have *seared as with a hot iron,** and are so far from being struck with horror at their deeds, *that they work iniquity with greediness.*† On the other hand, those, whose crimes are often of a fainter die, are commonly distracted with the sharpest compunction. Were this, consequently, the only punishment of wickedness, in a future world, these last might be the greatest sufferers. Both the *justice,* and the *wisdom* of God, therefore, assure us that, while he allows, to the natural consequences of vice, their full power, he hath also ordained, for the violation of his laws, other *positive* sanctions, which will convince

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those,

* 1 Tim. iv. 2.

† Eph. iv. 19.

those, who are insensible to every feeling, but that of *pain*, that, although they may escape even the reproaches of a *wounded spirit*, they cannot evade the vengeance of that almighty arm, which will hold them; *though they make their bed in hell.** We have reason to understand Scripture literally so far, and to believe that there is an appointed place of torment and horror, in which perverse and malicious men will be confined, and society, far from alleviating, will only aggravate, their pains. But, let me not attempt to describe what no human language can express, because no present suffering can convey any adequate conception of it, and what the tongue of one of those infernal spirits, which would count it happiness to have it cooled with *a drop of cold water*,† only can declare !

To

* Psalm cxxxix. 8.

† Luke xvi. 24.

To both states, of future happiness, or misery, Scripture applies one common epithet. They are both asserted to be *eternal*, or *everlasting* ;* *i. e.* to have no *end*.† These expressions, as far as relates to the future condition of the wicked, have been interpreted in such a manner, as to render them significative only of a *very long*, though not *infinite*, duration. But, that there is no foundation for such a gloss, the very positive nature, and the frequent repetition of the words themselves, serve sufficiently to evince. Indeed, the Spirit of Inspiration, as if foreseeing those evasions which the heart of man, prone to mitigate the consequences of that corruption, to which it is so devoted, would seek, hath, in other places still more explicit, effectually precluded all ground for them. That *fire*, which, in one place, it terms

N 3 *everlasting*,

* Matt. xxv. 41. 46.

† 2 Thess. i. 9.

everlasting, it calls, in another, the *fire that is not quenched*.* That punishment, which it qualifies with the same epithet, it also represents as a *worm that dieth not*.† It declares, that *the smoke of the torments of the wicked ascendeth up for ever and ever*;‡ and that *they shall be tormented for ever and ever*.§ Thus, we have every reason for believing, on the authority of Scripture, that the state of future condemnation, as well as that of future felicity, will be *strictly eternal*. This, however, has furnished, if not a *real*, at least, a *plausible*, objection to the *goodness* of the Deity. For, it has been said, that it would have been much better not to have created those whom God foresaw, as doomed to everlasting misery; and that, since he has permitted their existence, and their *eternal misery*, it is difficult

* Matt. xviii. 8.

† Mark ix. 43, 44.

‡ Rev. xiv. 11.

§ Rev. xx. 10.

difficult to vindicate either the *wisdom*, or the *goodness*, of this appointment. It will be proper to bestow some thoughts on this subject, and to see to what the objection amounts.

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CHAPTER VI.

The Eternity of Future Punishments is not inconsistent with the Wisdom and Goodness of the Deity.

It has been, already, shewn that the permission of *moral evil* is inseparable from *free agency*. The *natural* and necessary consequences of corruption, proceeding from the abuse of freedom, must also be permitted. Every species, every degree, and every extent, of depravation, however small, or short, is inconsistent with the divine perfections and laws; and whatever

whatever these require must, in the order of things, infallibly take place. If free agency, the chief source of happiness to man, and the foundation of all virtue and religion, required the permission of vice, and its continuance during a state of trial, its *miser*y, to whatever extent, or duration, when it has become habitual to the soul, follows, as a *necessary consequence*.

Habits of depravity and impenitence must always be the objects of God's displeasure, and, as such, be always liable to punishment. Moreover, the constant duration of future punishments is founded on the same reasons which require the infliction of punishment, at all; namely, the support of the divine government, by counteracting the temptations to sin by the terror of its consequences. For, were any hopes of pardon, or mitigation, in a future life, left, of these the *deceitfulness of sin** would ever avail itself, as so many

* Heb. iii. 13.

many securities for unrestrained indulgence. We see how ineffectual is even the opinion of *eternal punishment* to check the torrent of profligacy and vice.

Nay, if we examine the matter with closer attention, it will be obvious that the *eternity* of punishment, which appears so contradictory to the *goodness* of God, is founded on the necessity of *moral government*. Vice, as has, just now, been observed, must always be an object of the divine displeasure, subject to punishment, and inconsistent with happiness. If it is finally impenitent, and incorrigible, it can never be exempted from the pains and uneasiness with which this state of mind is necessarily connected, and, to these, in order to deter men from contracting inveterate habits of depravity, it is highly consistent, both with *infinite wisdom*, and with *infinite goodness*, to superadd other *positive* sanctions of the most severe kind.

Now,

Now, a state of trial and discipline, such as this life, implies another of *retribution*, by which it is to be succeeded. For, a *perpetual trial* is a contradiction in terms. Some period, therefore, there must be, within which every character is to be irretrievably fixed, and classed either with the *happy*, or the *reprobate*. If a character is finally of the latter description, it must unavoidably share all the misery, attached to such a mind, by the eternal constitutions of heaven. Shall we say that this life is not a period of sufficient length for trial and discipline? Let, then, another of greater extent be pointed out for this purpose. The same objection would immediately recur, and a longer period still might as reasonably be desired. Nothing would satisfy the corrupted heart, but an *eternity* of unrestrained, unpunished wickedness.

God,

God, unto whom are known all his works from the beginning of the world,* must be the only fit judge of this matter, and, whatever period he has fixed, we may be sure, is the most proper, and that which allows, both to the good, and the wicked, every reasonable time for their trial, and the consummation of their characters. It is true that the duration of life is equally uncertain to all, and that no man knows how soon he may be called to give an account of his actions. But, as, on the one hand, this uncertainty is a proof of the Deity's goodness, by exempting us from the apprehension of death, which the knowledge of its appointed hour could not fail to produce; so, on the other, it affords the strongest argument for moral vigilance, and improvement. Meanwhile, no person can complain of the severity of the divine threatenings, if he is fully warned of his danger, is furnished with

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* Acts xv. 18.

every necessary aid for avoiding it, and, as long as life continues, has still space left for repentance. The severity, threatened, is the strongest motive for amendment, and, if this is ineffectual, is it to be expected that the fear of milder punishment will be efficacious? If any person neglects these awful threatenings, and despises this tremendous danger, as it is, now, presented to his imagination, could there be any hope that he would listen to the former, or be alarmed by the latter, in any future period? The probability is that he never would. Long practice of vice consolidates the vicious habit, and hardens the heart;* and, since God, in his

*Quin et supremo cum lumine vita reliquit,
Non tamen omne malum miseris, nec fanditus omnes
Corporeæ excedunt pestes; penitusque necesse est,
Multæ diu concreta modis inolescere miris.*

VIRG. ÆNEID. Lib. vi. v. 735—38.

Nor can the grov'ling mind,
In the dark dungeon of the limbs confin'd,
Assert the native skies, or own its heav'nly kind.
Nor death itself can wholly wash their stains;
But long-contracted filth ev'n in the soul remains.

DRYDEN.

his revealed word, has positively declared that this life is the only period of probation, and that men's fate will be irreversibly fixed in a future, we may safely conclude that he knew, from all eternity, that this constitution was best adapted to every purpose of *moral government*, and, consequently, to the happiness of his *intelligent* and *moral* creation. For, although mankind must proceed from *particulars* to *generals*, and, therefore, from the exercise of the benevolent and kind affections, of a subordinate class, to those which are more comprehensive ; and, though, on this account, it is highly perilous, in any of our species, to assume what he deems to be *general philanthropy*, as a rule of conduct, to the exclusion of the tender *charities*, implanted in every human breast, the case is the reverse with the Deity. His *omniscience* presented, to his view, the whole system of his creation, at one glance ; he knew the whole, at the same time that he knew the parts ; he rendered these

these last subservient to the universal good; and he implanted, in his rational creatures, benevolent affections of a contracted kind, as conducive to the welfare of the entire *moral world*. The only effectual encouragement to virtue, the only effectual restraint to vice, is the enactment of rewards sufficiently animating, and of punishments sufficiently formidable. The greater these are, in prospect, the more powerful is the check, and the more invigorating the encouragement. I grant, indeed, that the infliction of cruel human punishments, in this life, while the course of probation is still unfinished, has rather a tendency to corrupt, than to correct, a people, by inuring them to savage and horrible spectacles. But, the case is different, when all hopes of amendment are gone, and the period of probation is closed. Then, every character is completely formed. Vice is rivetted on the soul. Its natural consequences are allowed to take place. It is necessary that

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its final result should be tremendous and irreversible.

Besides, this world is only a part of a vast system. We have, as has been shewn in a preceding part of this Essay, every reason to suppose that there are other worlds of intelligent and moral beings. As we find that, among men, prisons, public examples, and places of punishment, are useful for impressing vicious minds with terror; so, the *eternal* sufferings of the incorrigibly perverse and wicked of the human race, as they certainly convey an awful warning to those of our own species, who are still in a state of trial, may also prove salutary to other classes and orders of rational creatures.

Let it also be remarked that, although future punishments, when incurred, are interminable, it will not follow that the degree of suffering is equal to all. In this respect, there may be degrees pro-

portioned to the malignity and turpitude of vice contracted. As, in heaven *there are many mansions*; so, we may suppose that there are many dreary abodes in hell.

Although certain Christian writers have strenuously opposed the *Scripture-doctrine*, as the *orthodox*, or, to express myself in a manner less liable to objection, the *majority of Christians* hold it to be, this doctrine cannot be so repugnant to common feeling, as has been alleged, or even to the calm dictates of reason itself. It was admitted by the most enlightened of the Heathen Philosophers.—Plato, towards the conclusion of his *Phædo*, represents Socrates, as saying that the most atrocious and incorrigible sinners will be consigned to a place of punishment, whence they will never escape.* Hence, it

* Οι δ' αὐτοῖς πόνους ἀνίστασ ἔχειν, διὸ, τὰ μέγθη τῶν ἀμαρτητῶν, οὐ τερπούντας πολλάς, οὐ μεγάλας, οὐ φόνες ἀδίκων, οὐ παρο-

it is evident that the injustice of subjecting decided and incorrigible depravity to its own consequences, and to other *positive penal inflictions*, which has appeared so striking to modern Philosophers, or to a certain class of *philosophical Divines*, occurred not to the greatest Moral Philosopher of antiquity. I cannot help thinking that, in all cases, where the question turns on what natural sentiments suggest, we must have recourse to the dictates of the human mind, unenlightened by Revelation. On the point immediately be-

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fore

νόμες πολλαὶς εἰςεργασμένοι, οὐταντα τυγχάνει ὅντα τεικύτα, τούτους δὲ οὐ ποιήσει μοῖρα ἐπιστει εἰς τὸν τάρταρον, οθεν δύποτε ἐξελίγεται.

“ Those, who appear to be incorrigible, by reason of
 “ the greatness of their sins, having committed many and
 “ great acts of sacrilege, or wicked and outrageous mur-
 “ ders, or crimes of the same heinous kind, just fate shall
 “ cast into Tartarus, whence they never escape.”—
*Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt, by no means, come
 out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.*—
 Matt. v. 26;

fore us, we have the decided opinion of *Socrates*, who was surely neither a fool, nor a Christian.

In opposition to the opinion, generally received, of the *eternity of future punishments*, three hypotheses have been devised.—*1st*; It is supposed that the most depraved of mankind, and even the apostate Angels themselves, with the *Devil* at their head, will, after a long period of *penal torment*, be purified from crime, restored to rectitude, and admitted to eternal happiness. Origen appears to have been the first Christian writer who started this opinion, the probable source of the Popish Purgatory. I give credit to this learned Father for his benevolent intentions; but cannot think that this opinion evinces the soundness of his understanding. For, if the *Devil* has chosen to be a *Devil*, it is surely absurd to pretend that he can become an *Angel of light*, which, on this hypothesis, must ultimately be
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the case. In fact, Origen was not the inventor of this notion. For this, as well as Purgatory, seems to have been derived from heathen ideas, concerning future punishments, in certain cases.

Ergo exercentur pænis, veterumque malorum
Supplicia expendunt. Aliæ panduntur inanes
Suspensaæ ad ventos ; aliis sub gurgite vasto
Infectum eluitur scelus, aut exuritur igni.

—Donec longa dies, perfecto temporis orbe,
Concretam exemit labem.

Has omnes, ubi mille rotam volvere per annos,
Lethæum ad fluvium Deus evocat agmine magno ;
Scilicet immemores supera ut convexa revisant;
Rursus et incipiunt in corpora velle reverti.*

VIRG. ÆNEID. Lib. vi. 739—51.

I say that this description was limited to *certain cases*. For, the opinion of Socrates,

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crates,

* For there are various penances enjoin'd ;
And some are hung to bleach upon the wind,
Some plung'd in waters, others plung'd in fires,
Till all the dregs are drain'd, and all the rust expires.

—But when a thousand rolling years are past,
(So long their puunishments and penance last,)
Whole droves of minds are, by the driving God,
Compell'd to drink the deep Lethæan flood;

crates, on this point, has been stated above. To this I may add the following from Virgil.—

—————Sedet, *aeternumque* sedebit
Infelix Theseus.*

ÆNEID. Lib. vi. 617—18.

This notion of *universal restoration* has, already, been shewn, in this chapter, to be inconsistent with every rational expectation, as well as with the dictates of Scripture.—The second hypothesis is that of the *annihilation* of the incorrigibly depraved, after a certain period of penal suffering. We have no instance of the *annihilation of material substances*, which undergo only changes and transmutations. We have, therefore, no analogical ground for inferring the annihilation of *Spirits*, which possess an immortal nature. Besides,

In large forgetful draughts to steep the cares
Of their past labours, and their irksome years,
That, unremembering of its former pain,
The soul may suffer mortal flesh again.—DRYDEN.

* Unhappy Theseus, doom'd for ever there,
Is fix'd, by Fate, in his eternal chair.—DRYDEN.

sides, if such is to be their termination, after a long duration of torment, the objection urged, against the divine goodness, from the *eternity* of punishment, if it has any weight, is equally valid against this hypothesis; namely, *that it would have been better for beings, whose lot is of the description implied in the hypothesis, not to have been created.*—The third is, that of repentance in an intermediate state between *death*, and the general *resurrection*, and *judgment*, in consequence of which remission is obtained. If this be a state of *sleep*, or *insensibility*, as is generally supposed by those who favour this scheme, how is it possible that the soul can repent, while its faculties are suspended? If it be a state of penal suffering, this supposition differs, in no respect, from that which has been first stated. Besides, all the three seem to be at variance with the New Testament.

But, to questions of this kind no limit can be fixed. They lead us beyond our depth, and plunge us in an abyss of unfathomable speculation. It is sufficient, if we can shew that any point, expressly revealed, is not inconsistent with reason, and with every just notion, which we can form, of the divine *wisdom* and *goodness*.

The same considerations, as those now alleged, serve still more strongly to shew that Scripture understands a *strict eternity*, when it promises *everlasting life*, or happiness. To these it is proper to add only that if the *Spirits of just men made perfect** laboured under any apprehension of their losing their state of consummate felicity, or of seeing it brought to a close, this would infuse such a bitter drop into their cup of enjoyment, as would bring a constant abatement of its relish; a circumstance which neither the *wisdom* nor the *goodness*

* Heb. xii. 12.

goodness of God will allow us to suppose.* Thus, the Deity has afforded, to virtue, every possible encouragement, and has checked vice by every means consistent with free agency ; and, in both cases, exerts his sovereignty to promote the highest happiness of his moral and intelligent creation.†

* O ! ye blest scenes of permanent delight !
Full above measure ! lasting beyond bound !
A *Perpetuity* of bliss is bliss.
Could you, so rich in rapture, fear an end,
That ghastly thought would drink up all your joy,
And quite unparadise the realms of light.

YOUNG'S NIGHT THOUGHTS, Night I.

† See, on this subject, *Tillotson's Sermon, Of the Eternity of Hell-Torments*. Vol. i. Sermon xxxv. folio edition—*Wollaston's Religion of Nature Delineated*, sect. ix.—*King's Essay on the Origin of Evil—Appendix concerning the Divine Laws*; sect ii. "concerning Divine Rewards, and Punishments—*Butler's Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed*. Part i.—*Of the Government of God by Punishments—Hurd's Sermons*. Sermon xi.—*An Enquiry into the Scripture-Doctrine, concerning the Duration of Future Punishment, &c.* by *Mathew*

Horbery, B. D. Fellow of Magdalen College, in Oxford. an. 1744.—The writer last mentioned produces many good observations, and endeavours to prove that the *Eternity of Future Punishment* is the doctrine of Scripture, and is consistent with Reason. It is curious that, although his Book was in my possession, when I composed my chapter on this subject, I had not perused it. But, my third Son had discovered it on my shelves, and mentioned it to me. This induced me to read it, while I was preparing my MSS. for the press; and, though this Author's train of reasoning and mine are very different, to borrow, from it, some ideas.

CHAPTER VII.

*The sacred Scriptures remove every objection
to the Wisdom and Goodness of God
which Reason is unable completely to solve.*

DIVINE Revelation has fully accounted for the general corruption of the human species, and I have endeavoured to shew that, when it had been once introduced by the first human pair, it could not be entirely eradicated without the miracle of a new creation, which it would have been necessary to repeat, as often as sin was committed. Revelation also shews us the Deity devising and executing a glorious plan

plan for the restoration of mankind to happiness, as far as was compatible with the freedom of their will, and the circumstances in which they were placed by the Fall. The origin, progress, and consummation of this plan have been sketched in the 1st Book of this Essay.* We see also that the Gospel counteracts the course of depravity, by every means adapted to this purpose; by the most admirable and comprehensive precepts, connected with the most exalted and consolatory doctrines, by examples of the purest kind, particularly that of our Lord Jesus Christ, by the most sublime and ennobling prospects, by assurances of pardon, protection, favour, and adequate aid, and by motives calculated to touch the strongest springs of the human constitution.

As nothing, however, can tend more to display, in the most amiable and convincing

* Chapter viii.

vincing light, the divine *wisdom* and *goodness*, than that state of perfect and eternal felicity which the Gospel has ensured to all who have, with humility and gratitude, accepted the terms of salvation which it offers, and have employed, with success, the means of purification, amendment, and moral excellence, which it prescribes, it may be proper to take a cursory view of that blessed state in which the whole scheme of our Religion will gloriously terminate.

I have, already, briefly stated that future felicity will consist in the consummation of *intellectual*, *moral*, *social*, and *religious* enjoyments.* These ideas I shall, now, expand, with as much brevity as I can attain.

By attending to the character of *intellectual*, *moral*, and *religious* enjoyments, we shall

* Chapter v. of this Book.

shall be convinced that they must constitute the highest felicity of which human nature is susceptible, and, of course, must prove the principal ingredients of consummate and eternal bliss.

1st; *Intellectual* pleasures must be first considered. Human reason, although very limited in its present state, and obscured in its prospects, is, nevertheless, capable of important discoveries, and of considerable range. Its successful exertions never fail to afford a pleasure which, pure and substantial in itself, increases in relish, in proportion to the frequency of enjoyment, and is pursued with greater ardour of desire, and vigour of exertion, the more extensively it is indulged. But, although man's *intellectual* faculties are capable of great improvements in all, and, in some extraordinary instances, have made astonishing attainments, it must still be acknowledged that, on points of the greatest importance, our notions are often

often obscure, and confused, when clearer and more definite conceptions would be highly desirable. In particular, how defective is our knowledge of God, and of his Providence ! How often, in the course of his dispensations, are the full vigour and stability of faith requisite to sustain the soul in the midst of the darkness that surrounds it ! How many difficulties are there even in *revealed religion*, where, though we have sufficient evidence to establish general belief, and to confirm confidence with regard to every obscure point, and the clearest rules for the regulation of practice, yet, the mind would derive high satisfaction from ampler and more explicit information !

In possession of future felicity, we have reason to believe that our ideas will be juster, our judgment more discerning, our knowledge more extensive. We shall be delivered from those impediments which, now, retard, and those avocations

cations which, now, divert our minds; and shall possess a thousand advantages of which this corporal frame, and this state, to which it is confined, are incapable. Our souls will no more be withdrawn, from their noblest exertions, by the allurements of sensual pleasure, interrupted by the demands of appetite, disturbed by the tumults of passion, distracted by the violence of pain, or disabled by the languor or decay of bodily organs. Our range of speculation will not, then, be confined to the perceptions of sense, as its origin, circumscribed by the bounds of painful and tedious research, for the discovery of truth, and, after all, in many cases, be able to attain to no more than to conjecture and hypothesis. The sphere of *intuition* will be enlarged. We shall see, at one glance, what must, now, be understood through a variety of views, and by a long series of induction. Truths, which are, at present, the result of intricate demonstration, will become *first principles,*

ciples, be directly admitted, and lead to others, now involved in impenetrable darkness. We shall have immediate access to the divine works, and the clearest views of their natures, connexions, dependences, effects, and of their reference to the universal system. Those intricacies, which now perplex us, will be evolved; those obscurities, which occasionally cloud our clearest prospects, will be dispelled; those doubts and uncertainties, which stagger our firmest hopes, will give place to certainty and assurance. We shall behold, around us, one serene, unbounded region of knowledge, in which the soul may expatiate with freedom, and understand with facility.

These must be the necessary results of the refinement and exaltation of our faculties, and of the removal of those obstacles which, at present, impede their exercise. We shall no more *see as through a glass darkly, but face to face, shall know, as*

*we are also known,** and, admitted to an intimate view of the bright, though tempered, radiance of original, unlimited knowledge and wisdom, shall easily comprehend every emanation from eternal intellectual effulgence.

2dly; Future felicity will also include the completion of *moral* enjoyment. This as much surpasses excellence merely *intellectual*, as propriety of action is preferable to justness of speculation. Our *active* faculties are, at present, the sources of our highest and most durable pleasures. They impel the soul to its objects, and supply the means of their attainment. To these the *understanding* must ever be subservient, though in the same manner as the guide is subservient to the traveller. The guide knows the ultimate point of the journey, and the places through which he, who makes it, desires to

* 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

to pass. To these he leads him by the safest and most easy ways, and prevents circuitous aberrations, or dangerous passages. In like manner, the *understanding* directs the *will*, in the pursuit of happiness. But, this being the object of all our *active* powers, to this the knowledge, acquired by our *intellectual faculties*, must ever be conducive ; and, when the former are rightly directed, and applied, they secure, to us, all the sources of genuine and permanent delight. Hence, when, in a future life, our *moral* faculties shall be duly rectified, and fixed to their proper objects, and these shall be placed, before them, in their highest excellence, it is evident what an astonishing accession of happiness must necessarily ensue ! Intrinsic *moral* rectitude must ever be the glory and supreme delight of *rational* and *moral* beings. Accordingly, Scripture declares that *the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto*

*unto the perfect day;** and the Apostle Paul affirms that *charity never faileth.*†

The same may, by parity of reason, be affirmed of all other *moral* qualities. Having their foundation in the very frame and contexture of the soul, they must endure with itself, and, by repeated exercise, rise to perfection. There is, however, this difference between our present *moral* condition, and that which will be attained in a state of *immortality*, that, in the latter, all our virtues will be purer, more refined, and more steady, less the result of partial affection, or of sudden impulse, and less subject to languor and abatement. They will, then, be purified from those mixtures of weakness, and of irregular and sinful desire, which now debase and contaminate our noblest *moral* energies, and retard our progress towards perfection.

3dly;

* Prov. iv. 18.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 8.

3dly; The happiness of the blessed will be *social*, and *benevolent*. This, as well as the succeeding, is involved in the observation, last stated. But, for the sake of perspicuity, I shall keep them distinct.

It is certain that the exercises of *benevolence*, through all its classes, exhibit the most exalted *moral* qualities. But, since this is the case, they deserve, on this very account, a separate consideration. Man is formed for society. This is evinced, not only by his dependent condition, but by all his affections. If he were *solitary*, he must, therefore, be miserable. Indeed, it must be confessed that one of the strongest instances of the general corruption of man is displayed in his perversion of the *social* affections. For, that very field, which should produce the most ample and delicious harvest of happiness, is commonly sown with the rank and poisonous weeds of *malice* and *misery*. Nay, what is more, ingenuity and understand-

ing are supposed to be most effectually displayed, not in the exertions of *benevolence* and *kindness*, but in those of *malice*, *rancour*, and *revenge*. This is so much the case, that a man, really *good*, is, by those who have perverted all the best and noblest principles of our nature, held to be a *fool*; as if not *God*, but the *Devil*, were the Archetype of *wisdom*. This is, however, the effect of gross and lamentable corruption. For, it is still certain that the benevolent affections, and their exercises, constitute the chief sources of human happiness.

Hence, we can never suppose that a state of perfect felicity will not afford the highest gratifications of *social* and *benevolent affection*. Even in our present condition, we find that all those personal talents, and endowments, and advantages, which the gracious Parent of good bestows on us, have a natural tendency to diffuse their salutary influence beyond the

the sphere of personal enjoyment; and that this always increases in proportion to the possessor's disposition to communication. The exercise and perception of benevolence and sympathy are so congenial to our nature, that, by these, every joy is heightened, and every pain alleviated; by their absence the former is diminished, and the latter aggravated. *To rejoice with them that do rejoice, and to weep with them that weep,** are the natural tendencies of the heart which, when freely indulged, afford, even in the participation of distress, a conscious glow of self-approbation which is excluded from the most exquisite gratifications of selfishness. Indeed, we find that the generous affections are gratified by all, excepting the most abandoned, when no unsocial concurrence of circumstances creates an unnatural collision of interest, when no virulence of animosity, no revenge, hurry the soul to a

* Rom. xii. 15.

course of action repugnant to its constitution, and, therefore, to its happiness. Is it not evident that He, who implanted these affections in the human breast, which are productive of so much delight, even amidst the obstacles and opposition with which they meet in our present state, will allow them their free course, when these obstacles are removed, when these abatements of their satisfaction exist no more, when their indulgence must be pleasure, unmixed, unclouded, unallayed ; when *all tears shall be wiped away, when there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor pain ?**

But, we need not have recourse to the inferences of reason, since Revelation itself expressly confirms this point, by representing the blessed as associated *with an innumerable company of Angels, and with Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and with*

* Rev. xxi. 4.

*with God, the Judge of all, a general Assembly, and Church (or rather convocation) of the first-born, which are written in heaven;** and shall possess new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness†—an innumerable company of Angels, who never departed from their original rectitude—a general assembly of just men who have, by divine grace, been renovated and sanctified—a world of which the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort,‡ is the supreme Governor—Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant, the friend and the Saviour of mankind, is the Vice-gerent—the Angels, the pure images of both, are the ministering Spirits,§—and the subjects compose a community of the wisest and best of men of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues,||—a company, an assembly, a world of pure and virtuous beings, unsusceptible of want or weakness, and, consequently,

* Heb. xii. 22, 23, 24.

† 2 Pet. iii. 13.—See Chapter v. of this Book.

‡ 2 Cor. i. 3. § Heb. i. 14. || Rev. vii. 9.

quently, of *covetousness, ambition, or discontent*—unexposed to pain, or injury, and, consequently, to *jealousy, suspicion, or fear, to anger, revenge, or malice*—destitute of all cause of disguise, and, consequently, of *fraud, hypocrisy, and falsehood*. In a society thus composed, in a state thus constituted, no interest can be separate from that of the whole, no passion inconsistent with it. The stream of sympathy, and kindness, and love, must flow in a clear, unruffled course, and in an uninterrupted channel; swell, as it proceeds, with the accession of every mental energy, and spread delight and happiness through the most remote regions of the celestial kingdom.

4thly; As the Spirits of just men made perfect will be united in the most tender bonds of friendship; so, they will be concentrated in the supreme source of every good and perfect gift, of every sensation truly*

* James i. 17.

truly delightful ; and will be raised to the most expansive adoration, and inflamed with the most extatic ardours of divine love.

Even in this lower world, in this outer court of the divine temple, God hath not left *himself without witness* ;* but, hath afforded the most striking evidences of his *almighty power*, of his *infinite wisdom*, and of his *overflowing beneficence*. It is impossible to open our eyes, and not to be struck with the most august, and sublime, and endearing ideas of the great Creator and Governor of the world. The proofs of these attributes have been, already, produced, in a manner, I acknowledge, inferior to their real strength.

How much more will our opinion of these divine perfections be raised, and our consequent admiration, gratitude, and devotion

* Acts xiv. 17.

votion be increased, when we shall be introduced into the *new heavens, and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness* ;* when we shall have a complete view of the plan of Providence, and perceive its apparent imperfections, inequalities, and disorders, resolved into harmony and excellence ; when we shall be admitted into the *holy of holies*, the immediate presence of God himself, contemplate his perfections in their pure unreflected glory, and observe how narrow a field the whole creation affords for their display ! On the bare anticipation of these prospects, our souls rise above this clouded scene, ascend into the celestial regions, dwell on the glorious images presented to the imagination, and pant to join, before the throne of God, in the rapturous doxology—*Blessing, and honour, and glory, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever !†*

These

* 2 Pet. iii. 13.

† Rev. v. 13.

These are a few rude notions, a few imperfect sketches of that *joy unspeakable, and full of glory*,* which is reserved for the faithful disciples of Christ, in those everlasting mansions which he has purchased for them, and prepares. Rude and imperfect, in the highest degree, these notions and sketches certainly are. For, as yet, *it doth not appear what we shall be; but, we know that, when God shall appear, we shall see him, as he is.*† We know that we shall no longer be subject to pain, infirmity, disease, and want ; to care, anxiety, and vexation ; to keen appetites, and turbulent passions ; to oppression and injury ; to temptation and remorse ; to calamity and affliction ; to the attacks of open, or to the treachery of concealed, enemies ; to the loss of relations, or the desertion of friends ; to the diminution, or expiration of our enjoyments ; in fine, to any species of real *evil* which it is possible

* 1 Pet. i. 8.

† 1 John iii. 2, 3.

sible to conceive. On the contrary, *we know* that the good will be unalterably happy in the unlimited possession of the divine favour and communion, in the consciousness of unsullied rectitude and holiness, and blessed with every enjoyment which an immortal and sainted soul can receive, almighty *power*, *wisdom*, and *goodness* can bestow, and eternity afford scope for partaking.

May we not, at any rate, safely conjecture that a principal part of supreme felicity will consist in surveying, and completely understanding, the plan and economy of redemption, in all its admirable contrivance, and comprehensive extent? That plan, into which even *the Angels desire to look*,* will, then, be completely unfolded by its consummation. It will display infinite *power*, *wisdom*, and *goodness*, in the creation of free agents, in order

* 1 Pet. i. 19.

order to render them capable of the highest possible happiness ; and, when man, by the abuse of his powers, had plunged himself in misery, the same attributes will be still more gloriously manifested in the recovery and restoration of all who were susceptible of an eternity of bliss. Even here below, we feel our admiration increased, and our gratitude heightened, by the consideration of the distress from which we have been delivered, of the goodness which prompted to relieve, and of the ability exhibited in devising the means of deliverance, and in carrying them into effect. How much more must these pleasing affections be excited, when the whole extent of human misery, occasioned by MORAL EVIL, and the completion of human happiness, produced by its effectual remedy, are placed before the view ; when the divine *benignity, wisdom, and power,* are seen *face to face* ; and the Redeemer's merits are beheld in all the serenity, and boundless extent

extent of their glory; and the redeemed enjoy, in his everlasting communion, the participation of his communicable perfections reflected in the immutable graces of their own souls. *If, by one man, sin had not entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death had not passed upon all men, for that all have sinned,* could such subjects of admiration, gratitude, and love, have existed?*

After all, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.†

Such is the grand and magnificent prospect in which the whole scheme of our Religion terminates, and which it is designed to realize to all those, of the human race, who embrace and obey that religion. This prospect evinces, in a very

* Rom. v. 12.

† 1 Cor. ii. 9.

very striking and decisive manner, the *wisdom* and *goodness* of the universal Parent. But, when we consider the means which he has employed for the attainment of this glorious design, our ideas of his *wisdom* and *benignity* are extended to the utmost possible expansion. These means are the incarnation, the humiliation, the miracles, the instructions, the example, the sufferings, the cruel and ignominious death, the resurrection, the ascension into heaven, the eternal exaltation, of the Son of God himself; the effusion of the Holy Ghost on his Apostles, the miraculous gifts bestowed on their immediate followers; the sacred oracles, whose integrity has been preserved amidst every corruption of religion; the establishment of the visible Church of Christ; the astonishing propagation of Christianity, in spite of all the combined powers of the world; the series of prophecies which are in a gradual progress of fulfilment—the preservation of divine truth even to

the present day.—These, whoever will consider, with any degree of serious attention, will behold such a blaze of divine *wisdom* and *goodness*, as must overpower all resistance of obstinacy, and restore, to clear vision, the jaundiced eye of prejudice.

In addition to all this, let it be considered that the belief and energy of the Gospel remedies every temporal evil, as far as it can be remedied in consistence with our present state. It shews the evils of this life to be our appointed course of probation, and intended to prepare us for a better. It assures us of the divine support and favour, if we submit, with resignation, to the divine will. It informs us that these very trials work out, *for us*, a *far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.** It teaches us that, as *the Captain of our salvation was made perfect through sufferings;*

* 2 Cor. iv. 17.

sufferings; so, many sons must, thus, be brought unto glory;* and that, after we have suffered a while, we may hope, as the Apostle prays, that *God will make us perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle us.*†

Hence, whether we consider the grand objects of the Gospel-scheme, the means which it employs for its advancement, or its effect on our present condition, we behold one uniform and incontrovertible display of *divine wisdom* and *goodness*, and we must confess that, on this subject, *every tongue must be stopped,*‡ and every heart must be rapt in silent admiration. *God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*§ *O! the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! For, of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory, for ever. Amen.*||

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I shall,

* Heb. ii. 10. † 1 Pet. v. 10. ‡ Rom. iii. 19.

§ Rom. v. 8.

|| Rom. xi. 33. 36.

I shall, next, proceed to deduce, from the truths, now fully established, the *inferences most necessary and useful to the conduct of life*. For, just speculation, in regard to *Religion*, and *Moral Science*, should always terminate in practice, and lead to the means of rendering men wiser and better, and, consequently, more happy in this world, and eternally blessed in the next. Happy may the person account himself who can contribute, in the smallest degree, to an effect so rational and beatific!

CHAPTER VIII.

*Of Piety, and the Worship of God, both
Public and Private.*

THIS Essay has, hitherto, been employed in establishing the *Existence*, the *Power*, the *Wisdom*, the *Goodness*, and the *Unity* of the Deity; and in removing, both by the suggestions of Reason, and by the much brighter discoveries of Revelation, the objections to his wisdom and goodness. These grand points may be considered as the *speculative* part of Religion, both *natural*, and *revealed*. But, from

these speculative principles are, now, to be deduced certain practical inferences of the highest importance. By these, conduct, the grand object of all just metaphysical and moral speculation, ought to be regulated; and these are obligatory, in proportion to the evidence of the principles on which they are founded. This might lead us into a system of Ethics, resting on those theological truths which are suggested by the light of nature, and confirmed and expanded by the still clearer, and more explicit doctrines of Revelation, and comprehending all the principles and practical rules of *Moral Philosophy*, but flowing from another source. In the *Science of Morals*, practical rules are derived from the contemplation of the human constitution; but, in *Theological Science*, they are deduced from the Divine Will. Some Moral Philosophers have, indeed, laid the foundation of morality in the *Will of God*, as it is discoverable by Reason. This is particularly

cularly the case with *Wollaston*, in his *Religion of Nature Delineated*. *Natural Religion* is, however, commonly considered, as a branch, rather than as the foundation, of *Moral Philosophy*. In fact, both these departments of knowledge may be viewed, either as *subordinate*, or as *principal*, according to the manner and design of treating them. When the *Science of Morals* is the main subject, and the duties of man are deduced from his nature and constitution, his duty to God enters into these, as an essential part. When, on the other hand, *Natural Religion* is the science chiefly treated, our duties to *God*, to our *neighbour*, and to *ourselves*, are deduced from our relation to our Creator, and from the view of his attributes which has been previously exhibited. All that I intend, at present, is to draw, as concisely as possible, the practical inferences which are deducible from the grand truth of the existence of a Creator *infinitely powerful, wise, and good*, which, after the

refutation of the strongest objections to his *wisdom* and *goodness*, must be considered as completely established. The length, to which this attempt has, already, extended, renders compression more necessary in that part of it which still remains to be executed.

1st; It is impossible to contemplate *infinite wisdom*, without entertaining, for it, the most profound reverence. The consideration of *infinite goodness* necessarily excites the warmest and most devoted love. Awe and dread are produced by the view of *almighty power*; and, as these emotions would soon be transmuted into terror and consternation, if this last attribute were disjoined from the two others, first mentioned; so, its union with them tempers fear with complacency, and sweetens reverence with confidence and resignation. When we consider God, as our Creator, Preserver, and continual Benefactor, we must necessarily feel, towards

wards him, the most lively emotions of gratitude, and the most sincere desire of conciliating his favour, of securing his protection, and of co-operating, as far as our feeble abilities will permit, with the plan of his *moral government*.

The smallest reflection must convince us that, to a Being of infinite perfection, and spotless purity, nothing, in the conduct of his intelligent creatures, can be acceptable, but a strict conformity to those laws which he hath engraven on their hearts, an imitation of his moral attributes, and that purity of intention, that wisdom of choice, and that beneficence of pursuit, which contribute to private, and to general happiness, and display the reflected features of the *Father of Spirits*.*

This is the foundation of all pure and genuine *piety*, which, directed by the understanding,

* Heb. xii. 9.

derstanding, is seated in the heart, and has an immediate tendency to shed a salutary influence on conduct. It is, in fact, when rightly understood, and allowed to operate according to its genuine nature, the best and noblest principle of the soul, as it is dictated by the contemplation of infinite perfection, is led by the intimate persuasion of over-ruling Deity, and is animated by the most glorious prospects. It possesses, thus, a force, a stability, and a salutary efficacy, which belong to no other principle by which mankind can be actuated.

So perfectly conformable to the dictates of reason is the voice of the Gospel, that, although the information, which it affords, concerning *moral duties*, as well as that which it gives on every other branch of *theological Science*, greatly surpasses all that unassisted reason could ever prescribe, yet, it lays the foundations of these in the human constitution, and on the relation

relation which man bears to his Creator. Here, I cannot help making an observation which tends to evince the analogy subsisting between the instruction deducible from the observation of nature, and the moral precepts of the Gospel.

These last are not, in the New Testament, exhibited in a regular series, deduced from certain elementary principles, arranged in a scientific manner, or presented according to a regular classification. They are scattered through different parts of the sacred Writings, and delivered, as particular occasions afforded opportunities of expressing them. But, it is easy to refer them all to certain immutable principles; and, for the sake of perspicuity, it becomes necessary to arrange Christian duties under certain heads, and to establish a just and natural order. Thus, also, the evidences of supreme *wisdom* and *goodness* are spread over the face of the world. Thus, the knowledge

knowledge of man is to be obtained by the examination of his constitution and circumstances, by our experience of his operations, and by history. But, to collect, either the proofs of supreme direction and government, or the rules of right conduct, and the instructions for the attainment of happiness, patient induction, and the due application of intellect, are necessary.

In like manner, all the *pious*, and *social*, and *prudential* duties are to be found in the sacred volume. But, God, who inspired and dictated the sacred Writings, intended not to supersede, but to assist; not to preclude, but to enlighten, our rational faculties; and still left it to the intelligent Christian to collect, into one regular and well digested system, the whole plan and compass of Christian morality, as it regards our *Creator*, our *neighbour*, or *ourselves*. To those, however, who are not possessed of this vigour and comprehension

hension of mind, the precepts, which are occasionally delivered, are sufficient for the regulation of conduct, and are adapted to every circumstance and condition of life.

2dly; I have above given a general description of *Piety*, as comprehending all our duties to the Supreme Being. But, it is evident that, in order to ascertain, and, still more, to practise these, it is necessary to *know* him. By the *knowledge* of God is not to be understood merely a persuasion of his existence, in contradistinction to the absurd and horrid opinions of *Atheism*. But, it implies also such a *knowledge* of the divine nature, as will secure those, who possess it, against the errors of superstition, enthusiasm, and bigotry. It is necessary to *know* God, not only because this is the most sublime of all sciences, but because it is, of all, the most interesting and important to man. This *knowledge* affords the best basis of all

all *morality*, and right conduct, and, on these, depend human happiness, both present, and eternal. We ought to know our Creator and Benefactor, in order to adore and worship him; we ought to adore and worship him in a manner suited to his nature; and we ought to ascertain his will, in order to regulate our conduct.

Beside those perfections, and the general exercise of them, which reason itself may discover, holy Scripture informs us that God has exerted a more *particular* providence towards mankind, by sending prophets to deliver his oracles and instructions; and the Gospel has assured us that, by the mission of his Son, *Jesus Christ*, he has revealed himself as a reconciled Judge, and as a most merciful Father, who hath disclosed, to the human race, a heavenly inheritance.

This *knowledge* of God must not only be acquired, but established and settled in

in the mind. It is capable of enlargement, in point both of clearness, and of extent. Such is the nature of man, that spiritual and divine conceptions make, on him, little *impression*, unless they are frequently presented to his mind, and brightened and invigorated by repeated meditation. Hence, many persons, who are far from being destitute of a *speculative knowledge* of Deity, live, nevertheless, as if they were entirely ignorant of this important subject, because their minds are seldom directed towards it, and are engrossed with sensible objects, which excite their desires, captivate their imaginations, and employ their activity. They *have no hope, and are without God, in the world.**

In order, therefore, to give firmness and stability to the *knowledge* of God, he must be rendered the frequent object
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* Eph. ii. 12.

of consideration, and, for this purpose, not only must every opportunity of this kind, which occurs, be seized, but such opportunities must be sought, and produced, by the exercises of piety. Neither can the *knowledge* of the Supreme Being be barren, and abstracted from *moral* effect. It must be *active*, *energetic*, and *productive*. There are many learned and ingenious men who can argue, with precision and acuteness, on theological questions, and yet, from their speculations derive no improvement. *The Devils themselves*, as the Apostle James informs us, *believe, and tremble.** In fact, this unproductive complexion is not peculiar to theological speculation. It is equally observable in *metaphysics*, and *morals*. These branches of science, though they have both, but particularly the latter, a near and intimate connexion with *practice*, and are, in reality, valuable only as far as this is the case; yet,

* ii. 19.

yet, in the present refined and *speculative* age, seem to be rendered exclusively objects of the understanding, and as chiefly designed to gratify literary curiosity, or to display acuteness, and ingenuity. Their influence on conduct is entirely overlooked ; and they seem to be classed with those sciences which, though they enlarge the sphere of human knowledge, have no influence on the conduct of man. It is hardly possible to conceive a more scandalous perversion. What would have been, with regard to this point, the opinion of Socrates ?

To the knowledge of the divine nature and attributes it is, therefore, necessary to add that of the *divine will*, with a view to obey it. An upright and well-disposed mind has a surprising effect in opening the understanding to celestial truth, to right apprehensions in regard to Deity, and to such notions of his nature, and providence, as confirm us in the path of

duty, and are an inexhaustible source of comfort in every situation, and circumstance of life.

The true *knowledge* of Deity produces all those virtuous affections, which Deity inspires, and of these the infallible result is a *holy* and virtuous practice. By *holy*, I understand not those foolish ideas, or performances, or those enthusiastic and irrational fervours, which that term seems to bear in the language of Devotees. No; I understand this word in the sense which it imports in the sacred Scriptures, as expressive of opinions, affections, and conduct, *separated* from those of an ignorant and abandoned world. It may be safely asserted that, when no *pious* affections, in the proper sense, exist, and conduct is, in general, irregular and vicious, great ignorance of the Deity obscures the understanding; or, at least, if the mind is possessed of abstract *knowledge*, on this subject, which is tolerably accurate, it is seldom

seldom *practically* applied, and is commonly extruded by other objects more connected with pursuits which engross attention, and excite activity. *He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.** .

3dly; Of all the affections, due to the Deity, the most pleasing, exalted, and consolatory, are *gratitude for his favours; resignation to his will; confidence in his providence; and love of his adorable perfection.*

The soul of man is naturally touched with *gratitude* on the receipt of favours; and ingratitude has always been regarded as the consummation of depravity. Since God is our greatest and most constant Benefactor, since his benefits are purely gratuitous, and we never can requite them in any manner, or degree, the least, that

we can do, is to fix, in our hearts, a deep impression of them, and to communicate that impression to others. The proper language of gratitude is strongly expressed by the Psalmist, in CXVI. Psalm. *What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits? I will pay my vows unto the Lord, now, in the presence of all his people. I will offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord.** In these words, we find both the *internal* sentiment, and the *external* expression, which is its natural consequence.

Gratitude is as agreeable, as it is obligatory on the object of beneficence. To a good heart it is delightful to indulge the deepest sense of the divine benignity, and to discharge the obligations of gratitude by the only means in our power. Benignity can never be duly felt and appreciated, but by a benevolent mind. Hence,
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* 12. 17.

it so frequently happens that the *selfish* are ungrateful, and consider, as a burden, those benefits which good men recognize, and cherish, as motives to imitation. The consciousness of grateful sentiments fills the soul with inexpressible satisfaction. It feels itself moving in the order of nature, and enjoys the pleasure which such feeling always inspires.

By *confidence in God*, and *resignation to his will*, we are to understand the firm persuasion that the *divine will* is always prompted by *infinite goodness*, and directed by *infinite wisdom*; that all nature is under God's government; that nothing happens without his appointment, or permission; and that, in the end, *all things will work together for good to them that love him*.* These considerations ought to exclude murmuring against the divine dispensations, even when they wear the most

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* Rom. viii. 28.

gloomy aspect, to lead us to ascribe every appearance of defect in the structure and government of the world, not to want of *wisdom, goodness, or power*, in the Supreme Creator, and Governor, but to our own ignorance, and to the contraction of our views, which incapacitates from perceiving the remote combinations of things, and, much more, from embracing the wide compass of even *sensitive* being. The same persuasion should lead us to suffer, with patience, the distresses with which we may be visited, nay, to bear, with composure, the *moral evil* which we have had no share in producing, and could not prevent. In former parts of this Essay, it has been clearly proved that those *distresses* and *evils* are not only unavoidable in the present system of things, but are rendered subservient to the general happiness.

This acquiescence in the *divine will* affords the most ample source of tranquillity

lity of mind, in every situation of life. The Christian has a refuge, denied to every other person, which all the arguments, and all the consolations of philosophy never can supply. To be fully convinced of this, we have only to peruse the most admired compositions of Pagan antiquity on this subject ; such as *Cicero's Consolation on occasion of the death of his daughter Tullia; the Pieces of Seneca, addressed to different persons under affliction; the beautiful 1st chapter of Quintilian's VI. Book, on the loss of his Son*, which cannot be read, with dry eyes, by any feeling mind ; and *Boetius' Consolation of Philosophy*. To these writers two essential points were wanting—the assurance that we are under the government of a reconciled and propitious Creator—and the certainty of an immortality of happiness to the pious and good, after this transitory and checkered scene. Can any thing, in fact, be more consolatory and invigorating, than the firm persuasion that we are un-

der the protection of *infinite wisdom, goodness, and power*, and that, whatever troubles and perplexities may befall us in this lower world, the issue must be happy and glorious, if we faithfully discharge our duty, as men, and as Christians ?

The necessary consequence of the serious and intelligent contemplation of the divine perfections, and of the pious dispositions, already stated, must be the most *ardent love of Deity*, in whom centres every amiable quality. The *love of God* is, properly speaking, that affection which arises on the consideration of his infinite *goodness*, an affection that produces delight, and inspires an ardent desire of pleasing him.

This habit of soul is incompatible with that servile *fear* which enchains the superstitious mind. It is, however, commonly attended by a tender and delicate apprehension which rises in proportion to the

the *love* on which it is founded. It is essential to all pure and vital religion. It is the principle which gives life and energy to *devotion*, and renders every duty towards God, or for his sake, a source of delight to ourselves.

*Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, says our Saviour, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind,** because this is the true spring, not only of pious offices, properly so called, but of every *moral action* whatever. While we obey God from any other principle, but the *love* of him, our conduct neither proceeds from its proper spring, nor will produce salutary effects. It will, at best, be only the appearance of *morality*. Our Saviour's precept, by no means, implies that our affections should be exclusively devoted to God, without regard to his creatures. We naturally love amiable qualities, of whatever

* Matt. xxii. 37.—Mark xii. 30.—Luke x. 27.

whatever degree; and the good qualities of our fellow men are calculated to excite our esteem, and to engage our affection. We are also placed in certain relations, of domestic, or civil, society, which are so many bonds of attachment, dictating certain appropriate duties. We value whatever is fitted to procure, or has procured, us benefit, or advantage. Hence, we are surrounded by objects, and placed in relations, which excite and occupy our attention, and prompt our activity. But, as every thing really good, amiable, and salutary, originally proceeds from the Deity, and as all derived being is necessarily imperfect, it follows that God ought to be the supreme object of esteem and affection, and that no created excellence, or power, ought to be placed in competition with the excellence and power of the Creator.

Although Reason itself seems to dictate these principles, yet, the precept of *loving God*,

God, beyond every other object, must have been new and extraordinary to the Heathens, whose views were incapable of such elevation. I grant that certain sects of Philosophers decided that what they called the *first*, and *greatest good*, and *fair*,* ought to be the supreme object. But, this was merely an ideal form, without any archetype in which it was inherent. Accordingly, we find, in the most celebrated Moralists of antiquity, no precept enjoining the unrivalled *love* of Deity. It belonged to a divine Teacher, such as Christ, to place this primary duty in its proper light, to exhibit the Deity, as the centre and origin of all perfection, and to draw the human heart to Him, as the object which ought chiefly to engage its admiration, to kindle its love, and to prompt its activity. To the Gospel it peculiarly belongs to have inculcated the devotion and worship of the heart. In
order

* Το καλον κ' αγαθον,

order to counteract the vicious propensities of human nature, it was necessary to establish a principle pure in its origin, and corrective and improving in its effects; and, in order to render it lively and operative, Deity, and his perfections, were to be frequently presented to the view. The mind, engaged in the contemplation of these objects, acquires purity, delicacy, and elevation, and is delivered from those impediments of gross matter which Philosophers have considered as the greatest obstructions to the study, and the acquisition of real wisdom.

It is, however, astonishing how little influence this pure principle has on the hearts of professing Christians. It is either counteracted by a cold, phlegmatic, uninteresting *Theology*, which assumes a philosophical garb; or, if the heart is warmed, and exalted, it is delivered over to a wild, enthusiastic spirit, which loses sight

sight both of *true Christianity*, and of *Reason*. The admirable temperature between these extremes evinces the celestial source of Christian piety. It is neither formal, and cold; nor wild, and irrational. It is warm, but solid—it is composed, but animated—it rises above the world, yet, considers the world as its sphere of action.

The habitual contemplation of the attributes and works of God must lead to imitate him, and to acquire, by the mere force of sentiment, even independently of reasoning, an elevated turn of mind, and that relish of virtue which St. Paul calls the *new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness, and true holiness.** We, hence see with what propriety the expressions of Scripture are used, and how correct and beautiful they generally are. This beauty, this energy, this elegance
of

* Eph. iv. 24.

of allusion is, I fear, seldom rightly apprehended. If we would bestow the same application to the sacred Writings which we allot to human compositions, many excellences which, now, escape observation, would, to use a phrase of painting, start from the canvass, and captivate the mental eye.

Such are the happy effects of the *lore of God*. It is not an enthusiastic feeling, a blind zeal, or a mystical species of devotion; but a rational, enlightened, and well-regulated principle, animating the mind in the practice of virtue, and strengthening it to resist and overcome every form of temptation. Remove this from the heart, and not only you subvert the just order of *moral sentiment*, by making man forget his Father, and Benefactor, but you deprive him of all right direction, and of the most powerful spring of virtuous conduct. The incapacity of the Heathens to ascertain so exalted a principle

principle was occasioned by their ignorance of the Divinity, which deprived them of the noblest branch of knowledge, and introduced a glaring defect into all their Treatises on Morality. I must be permitted to observe that the narrow, groveling, and absurd moral sentiments of many, who bear the Christian name, but who never studied Christianity, originate in the same cause. The Gospel, by leading us, at once, to God, and by allotting the chief place to the duty which we owe to him, completely remedies this defect. That duty flows directly from the notions of the divine nature which Scripture inspires. If these are just, as they certainly are, this duty is immediately established, and must occupy the highest class of human obligation. A Theology, so pure, and true, must necessarily produce a correspondent system of morality. No Pagan Moralist could ever say, *Love and imitate Jupiter.** Neither Jupiter, nor any

* See Fenelon—*Lettres sur divers sujets de Religion.*

any other Heathen Deity, was an object of love, or of imitation. But, the God of Christians justly claims every affection of our souls, and the more we render him the object of our meditations, the more will our minds be habituated to the practice of justice, of humanity, and of self-government. These are the principles on which is founded the *love of God*, the genuine spring of Christian morality.

With the *love of the Deity* is necessarily connected *repentance* for having offended him; *supplication for pardon and forgiveness*; *firm resolutions of amendment*; and *a fervent desire of the continuance of his protection and favour*. It would be easy to enlarge on these different topics. But, my object must, at present be *compression*, not *enlargement*, or *illustration*.

The duties to God, which I have above stated, are those which are denominated *internal*. But, these naturally and unavoidably

avoidably suggest *external* duties, which are, now, to be stated with great brevity.

4thly; The *external* duties of Religion are the appropriate expressions of *internal* affections. No strong and ardent affection can lurk in the mind of man. It expresses itself by his words, by his gestures, and by his countenance. The more generous, elevated, and glowing, the sentiment is, the more it prompts to communication. It is peculiar to all virtuous and generous feelings, that they pant for disclosure, while such as are *vicious*, and *selfish*, seek concealment. Those of the former character have a social complexion, and are sure of *approbation*, when they are expressed, although they may not be admitted by vicious men. Those of the latter character are repulsive, and the meaner and more selfish any man is, the more he hates and opposes the *meanness* and *selfishness* of another, because

they interfere with his own base and interested pursuits.

Now, the most generous and elevated of all sentiments are the *esteem*, the *reverence*, and the *love* of supreme excellence, or, in other words, pure and rational *piety*. Piety, therefore, is the most communicative of all human affections. When it has seized the breast, it cannot rest satisfied with this solitary possession ; but, desires to extend to other minds, and, like a flame, spreads to every contiguous object susceptible of its influence.

Besides, those religious exercises, by which piety is expressed, have, in the first instance, a most salutary reaction on their source itself, and tend to invigorate and establish those very sentiments which dictate them. They have, further, an effect in imparting, to our brethren of men, religious impressions. All the better and nobler feelings of the soul are of a sympathetic

sympathetic nature. They are transfused from breast to breast, and, in their transfusion, acquire all the force and energy of social co-operation.

Vires acquirant eundo.*

So that *external* piety is not only dictated by *nature*, but is productive of all the good effects which the dissemination of virtuous principles is calculated to produce on society.

Hence, we discover the foundation of *religious worship*, in its proper sense, whether *public*, or *private*, as distinguished from the mere ceremonies of *superstition*. Hence also, we see that the worship of God is not dictated by *Revelation* only, but is also inculcated by *Natural Religion*. Accordingly, we find that some species of *external Religion* has existed among all nations, and has been most prevalent where the highest degrees of civilization

* They gather strength as they proceed.—VIRGIL.

have been attained. I shall observe only that *public* worship has, in a peculiar manner, the sympathetic effect of disseminating and confirming pious sentiments, and of uniting mankind by the strongest and most tender ties. Thus, *Reason*, that leads us to the knowledge of Deity, as our Creator, Benefactor, and Sovereign, and as possessed of infinite perfection, shews also that it is our duty to entertain, for him, the most profound reverence; to testify, to him, our most sincere, and lively, and humble gratitude; to supplicate his pardon, favour, and protection; and to express our resolutions of obeying his commands, as far as they are discoverable by us. These are the dictates of *Reason*, and of *Conscience*; and, considered as stamped with divine authority, as Revelation proclaims them to be, they acquire an additional cogency and obligation. On this subject it would be easy to enlarge, and to confirm these general observations

observations by a variety of passages of Scripture, as well as to detail the branches of divine worship. But, I must, now, consult brevity, and withdraw my *hand from the picture.**

* *Manum de tabula.*



CHAPTER XI.

Of Social Duties.

JESUS CHRIST has, in his summary of human duty, allotted the second place to those obligations which respect our brethren of men. *Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God*, says he, *with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength*;^{*} *this is the first and great commandment: and the second is like unto it—thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*[†] Here, it is evident that self-

* Luke x. 27—31.

† Matt. xxii. 37, 38, 39.

Love is considered as a lawful principle, since it is assumed as the measure of *social affection*. But, as man is sufficiently prone to *love himself*, this is not inculcated, on him, as a duty. It is rather admitted as a legitimate principle, which requires to be regulated, in such a manner as to enable it to attain its ends, and to prevent its excess. Besides, as mankind, and each particular society of men, are objects of much more importance than any individual, it is just and natural that man, in his estimate of duty, should regard his social obligations as of a rank superior to those of *self-interest*, and regulate the latter by the former. On this account, the principle of *self-love*, from which many moralists derive all human duty, is not, in fact, that original source of virtue which is suggested by Reason, or prescribed by Christianity. Both these concur in regarding man, in the first place, as the *creature of God*, and, in the second, as sent by him, into this world, to fulfil a

part

part allotted him, and as destined to seek his own private happiness in consistence with this double relation.

Man stands in need of domestic society. The conjugal connexion is necessary for the continuance of the human species. Children require the care of their parents for their maintenance and education, till they can provide for themselves, and acquire the capacity of acting their part in life. Hence, *conjugal*, *parental*, and *filial* duties. By the multiplication of families larger societies are formed. From this multiplication all nations have proceeded; and Fathers of families were the first Magistrates of Tribes, and the name of *Father* was continued with the office itself, even after it had ceased to be strictly appropriate.

But, it is not only by the natural results of domestic life, that the connexions of men have been extended. This extension

sion has also been dictated by necessity and convenience. Man is, of himself, feeble, helpless, unarmed. If he remains solitary, he can provide neither for his safety, nor his subsistence. There are also several arts, of prime utility to human life, which require co-operation, and the communication of experience. Of this kind are *agriculture*, the *care of cattle*, *architecture*, *navigation*, *manufactures* of various kinds, and the *different uses of metals*.

Man is endued with the faculties of *reflection*, *foresight*, *memory*, *invention*, *imagination*, and *reason*, and is capable of improvement from experience. All these faculties and capacities must necessarily receive their highest perfection in society. The same remark is applicable to *speech*, which is peculiar to our species, and declares, at once, our social character. We are also *sympathetic*, and susceptible of the participation of joy, or sorrow. We feel
a disposition

a disposition to friendship, admire and applaud candour and generosity, are stimulated by the desire of praise, delight in the free communication of sentiment, are prone to imitation, and are strongly influenced by the associating principle.

Thus, though corruption has spread through human society, and the active powers of our species are often productive of pernicious refinement, it is, nevertheless, certain that we are, by nature, *social beings*, and that well regulated society is the proper sphere of man.

There are different social states for which man is formed, and to the welfare of which he is bound to contribute. The first is *domestic society*, comprehending the relations of *husband* and *wife*; of *parents* and *children*; of *brothers* and *sisters*; of *masters* and *servants*. This society is the seminary of every other. Next, come the relations of *friendship* and *esteem*, of *mutual*

tual interests and *comforts*, constituted chiefly among neighbours and acquaintance, and cemented by frequent intercourse, by co-operation for common purposes, and by an unity of pursuits and enjoyments. After these, follow *national* and *civil* societies, composed of a vast number of families and neighbourhoods, united under one government, living under the same laws, speaking the same language, enjoying one common protection, and having, on the whole, the same social interests. These circumstances constitute the relation of *country*, and suggest and enjoin a variety of civil obligations of the most important and impressive kind.* There is, further, a *religious*

* Gradus autem plures sunt societatis hominum. Ut, enim, ab infinita illa decadatur, propior est ejusdem gentis, nationis, linguae, qua maxime homines conjunguntur: interius etiam est ejusdem esse civitatis. Multa enim sunt civibus inter se communia; forum, fana, porticus, viæ, leges, jura, judicia, suffragia, consuetudines præterea, et familiaritates, multisque cum multis res rationesque con-

gious society, not confined to *family*, to *neighbourhood*, or to *country*, but extending beyond all these limits, and subsisting among those who profess the same *religious opinions*, observe the same *religious rites*, and acknowledge the *same form of ecclesiastical government*. Of this religious society Christianity has exhibited

the

tractæ. Arctior vero colligatio est societatis propinquorum, ab illa enim immensa societate humani generis in exiguum angustumque concluditur. Prima societas in ipso coniugio est ; proxima in liberis ; deinde una domus, communia omnia. Id autem est principium urbis, et quasi seminarium reipublicæ. Sequuntur fratum conjunctiones; post, consobrinorum, sobrinorumque : qui cum una domo capi non possunt, in alias domos, tanquam in colonias, exirent. Sequentur connubia, et affinitates : ex quibus etiam plures propinqui. Quæ propagatio, et saboles, origo est rerum publicarum. Sanguinis autem conjunctio, benevolentia devincit homines et caritate. Magnum est enim, eadem habere monumenta majorum, iisdem uti sacris, sepulcra habere communia. Sed omnium societatum nulla præstantior est, quam cum viri boni, moribus similes, sunt familiaritate conjuncti. Illud enim honestum, (quod sæpe dicimus) etiam si in alio cernimus, tamen nos movet, atque illi, in quo id inesse videtur, amicos facit. Et quanquam

the most amiable representation by extending its ties and affections to all who love the *Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity*,* whatever diversity of speculative opinion, of worship, or discipline, may obtain among them. Lastly; there is a *society* of the whole human race, established by the ties of a *common nature*, and existing even
among

omnis virtus nos ad se allicit, facitque, us eos diligamus, in quibus ipsa inesse videatur: tamen justitia, et liberalitas id maxime efficit. nihil autem est amabilius, nec copulatius, quam morum similitudo bonorum. In quibus enim eadem studia sunt, eademque voluntates, in his fit, ut aequae quisque altero delectetur, ac seipso: efficiturque id, quod Pythagoras ultimum in amicitia putavit, ut unus fiat ex pluribus. Magna enim illa communitas est, quae conficitur ex beneficiis ultro citro datis, acceptis; quae et mutua et grata dum sunt, inter quos ea sunt, firma devincentur societate. Sed cum omnia ratione animoque lustraris, omnium societatum nulla est gravior, nulla carior, quam ea, quae cum republica est unicuique nostrum. cari sunt parentes, cari liberi, propinqui, familiares: sed omnes omnium caritates patria una complexa est: pro qua quis bonus dubitet mortem oppetere, si ei sit profuturus?—
Cicero de Officiis. Lib. i. c. 17.

* Eph. vi. 24.

among those who are widely separated, and entirely unknown to each other. To constitute this *society*, or rather *union*, nothing more is requisite than to be a human creature. For, all men are possessed of a common nature, of the same, or similar *faculties*, *affections*, and *passions*, are actuated by the same feelings, and placed in situations which bear a striking resemblance to each other. Wherever you find a man, you find a being who bears a close resemblance to yourself, who feels as you feel, who is susceptible of the same pleasures, and of the same pains, with those which are incident to yourself, and who, if you were destroyed, might occupy your place. Is it possible to conceive a stronger reason for granting, to him, whatever be his situation, or circumstances, the same rights which, as a *man*, you feel yourself entitled to claim?*

Every

* See, on this subject, several passages of the first importance, both from ancient and modern authors, quoted

Every society requires order, union, and subordination, founded on equitable principles. Whatever, therefore, tends to establish or to preserve these, is *indispensably* and *universally* obligatory. Hence, arises the distinction of *social duties* into *general*, and *particular*. The *general duties* are those which are incumbent on *all men* towards *all*, without exception. The *particular* are such as belong to particular *stations, relations, conditions, and circumstances*.

The *general duties* of a *social kind*, which are indispensably necessary to maintain association

in an *Essay on the Natural Equality of Men; on the Rights that result from it; and on the Duties which it imposes: to which a Silver Medal was adjudged by the Teylerian Society at Harlem, April, 1792—By William L. Brown, &c. Third Edition—Sold by Cadell and Davies, Strand.* These passages are to be found, Book II. Chapter 8th, of that *Essay*. I am most anxious to direct attention to these quotations, because, as the title of that 8th Chapter bears, *the just Equality of Human*

association and intercourse, and from which every particular *social duty* is deducible, as streams from the great river of *humanity*, are of two kinds, differing, not in *principle*, but solely in *extent*. These are *justice*, and *benevolence* denominated, in the beautiful language of Christianity, *charity*. The former consists in doing no injury, and in rendering, to every one, his due. It comprehends *good faith*, *truth* in

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Nature, and of Human Rights, has, in all ages, been maintained by the wisest and best of men, and, among these, by some of the most illustrious Sovereigns; and because there seems never to have been a period in which these just principles were in greater danger of being crushed, and consigned to oblivion, than the present. But, if they be true, as they unquestionably are, the preceding parts of this Work inspire the confidence that they will be preserved by the Providence of God, and that men's devices cannot overthrow them, lest haply they be found to fight against God.* It may be proper to observe that the *Essay on the Natural Equality of Men* was written in opposition to the revolutionary phrensy of the French.

* Acts v. 39.

our discourse, and even *gratitude* in action and sentiment. The latter, *benevolence*, or *charity*, is much more extensive, and consists in sincerely desiring the happiness of others, and in contributing to it, by every means in our power. To these two classes every *social* and *civil* duty may ultimately be reduced.

Since these duties are founded in the nature of man, and in the relations and circumstances in which he is placed, since God is the author of that nature, and has placed him in these relations and circumstances, and since it has been proved that the divine *wisdom* and *goodness* are unlimited, it follows that these social duties are sanctioned by divine authority, and are dictated by whatever can, or ought to, influence the human heart. They are particularly inculcated by that Revelation which the Deity has given for the comfort and salvation of his rational creatures.

Beside ;

Beside; experience proves that *fraud, craft, deceit, avarice, rapine, calumny, injustice, oppression, and violence*, destroy the peace of families, occasion ruinous law-suits, subvert public tranquillity, and produce wars among nations. If mankind, then, were generally impressed with a sense of that first of social principles, which dictates to *do no injury*; and if all were equally influenced by the second, which prescribes *benevolence, or charity*, it is evident that security, order, tranquillity, and the most delightful union, would be established, both in the grand community of mankind, and in the smaller societies into which it is divided.

Half-Philosophers consider these views as imaginary, and hear them mentioned with a sneer. But, when they *experience* the tormenting effects of depravity, they look *very grave*, and utter their bitter complaints. Sneering and witty days are, then, passed, and they feel that corrupt,

human life is no *jest*, but a very serious *reality*. For, in fact, the enforcement of the great duties, now under consideration, has been attempted by all the Legislators, whose views have been directed to the civilization of the nations over which they presided. But, although civil laws are certainly a powerful restraint on depravity and vice, something more is still necessary for the comfortable, the sincere, the amicable intercourse of mankind.

For, in the first place, the laws of civil society embrace not the whole compass of *social duty*. They prescribe only such *external* actions, as are dictated by *strict justice*, and are absolutely necessary for the preservation of external order and peace. They pay little, or no, regard to *internal* dispositions from which all virtue springs, and which constitute its essence. In the eye of human law, the man who performs what it requires is irreproachable, whatever

ever may be the complexion of his mind. Hence, *gratitude, benevolence, forbearance, generosity, candour*, and all the catalogue of lovely virtues, which invest society with the most pleasing colours, neither have, nor can have, any place in a civil code. For, if it were attempted to enforce them by penalties, their character would be lost, and their beauty effaced. They shrink from compulsion, and die, when they behold her aspect, as the vernal flowers perish by the northern blast.

In the second place; civil laws forbid, and punish only the most flagrant and atrocious violations of *justice*. They are completely silent with regard to a variety of *mean arts, secret frauds, and villainous proceedings*, which it is difficult to define exactly, and to bring to conviction, but which degrade the human character, and poison human happiness. Hence, a person of the vilest dispositions, and of the most odious reputation, may

do infinite mischief, and, yet, spend his life without incurring any *civil* penalty. Nay, such is the unavoidable imperfection of all *jurisprudence*, that *law* itself may be, and frequently is, most shamefully perverted to cover the most iniquitous purposes, and to authorize the most shocking *injustice*. Hence the proverb—

*Summum jus, sæpe summa injuria.**

Nor can I help making a short remark on this subject. It is this. Those lawyers, who, from their profession, have been accustomed to consider mere and strict law, as the standard of *right*, and *wrong*, are often, of all men, the most erroneous in their *moral judgments*. They are apt to consider *human law* as the only rule, and never to reflect how circumscribed and groveling are its extent, and character. They resemble, in this respect, the *mathematicians*, who require absolute

* The strictest *right* is oft the greatest *wrong*.

solute demonstration on every subject. I must, however, confess that the fault of *mathematicians* is of a more dignified nature. It attempts, absurdly enough, to raise all branches of human knowledge to the same conclusive evidence which belongs to *mathematics*. The *juridical error* lowers the standard of obligation, and brings *morals* down to *mere law*. What a different standard is offered by Christianity!

Thirdly; even with regard to those crimes which are condemned by human laws, how many of them remain unpunished, on account either of the secrecy of their commission, of the difficulty of obtaining legal proof, or of the number and power of the guilty.

In fine; the laws of civil society, instead of aiming at imprinting sentiments of *benevolence* in the minds of men, have often tended to produce impressions of a

contrary nature. Among different nations, severe laws have been enacted against foreigners, and, far from softening, have contributed to confirm, national antipathies. The Romans, in particular, whose jurisprudence is so generally, and so justly admired, were so little acquainted with that *law which is obligatory on all mankind*, that they regarded every thing, as lawful, which tended to the aggrandizement of their empire. I am not certain that this same unjust principle has been confined to the Roman people. We have only to reflect what different judgments we pronounce on *national* conduct, when it is our own, or that of other countries. In fact, there is hardly any nation whose civil constitutions are, in all respects, conformable to the pure morality of the Gospel. *Ignorance, narrow policy, party-spirit, and other vile passions,* have often produced the most iniquitous laws. This is so much the case, that I have often thought that *human legislation* has exhibited.

hibited, in many cases, the most glaring instances of human *folly* and *corruption*.

It is surely a most horrid perversion of ideas, and terms, to call that, *law*, which is repugnant to every notion of *natural justice*. But, consider the enactments which, in different ages and countries, have often been invested with that venerable name, to serve certain *political*, or rather *ruffian*, purposes ; and you will acknowledge that nothing can be more *inhuman* and *barbarous*. Man never has dared to say, “ I am “ determined to gratify my brutal pas- “ sions, my revenge, my selfishness, or my “ lust, in defiance of God, and man.” No ; he cloaks his purposes with some specious name, and, with the most detestable hypocrisy, enacts, as *law*, what is abhorred by God, and by all who retain any reverence for the rational nature. He, then, proceeds to proscription, torture, and bloodshed. All this we acknowledge, when we behold the scene in the historic page.

page. But, when our own passions are roused, we forget the acknowledgment, and are ready to renew the practice which we have condemned.

But, though human laws are imperfect in all the respects, now mentioned, their utility is, nevertheless, very great, not only for the maintenance of civil society, but also for the establishment of the rules of *morality*. They generally imprint, on the minds of men, the great principles of right and wrong. They prevent the prevalence of atrocious crimes, and maintain public order and tranquillity. They are, therefore, of primary importance, and even *absolutely necessary*; and, unless when they are flagrantly iniquitous, it is the duty of every *moralist* to enforce obedience to them, by his reflections, and to regard them as the chief means of preserving human society.

It

It is, however, still true that, since the dispositions of the mind are the springs of action, mankind require some principle which operates on the heart, and regulates its affections and propensities, and that this is the case, not only with the duties of religion, strictly so called, and those which immediately regard the individual, but also with those which are extended to social life.

It has often been asserted, that a principle of *honour* will always be sufficient to maintain true probity. But, nothing can be more erroneous. *Honour*, which is the respect shewn to virtue, or to that which is held to be virtuous, never can be an *original* principle, but presupposes that, which it is produced as constituting. *Honour* is as fickle as the opinions of mankind. *Honour* leads to all the follies and crimes which their false conceptions have engendered. All this might be easily proved, both by reason and example,

ample, if my limits admitted the discussion.

An *internal* sense of *justice*, as sanctioned by divine authority, is absolutely necessary to ensure the faithful discharge of social duties of the first order, and of primary importance to the maintenance of civil society. Revealed religion confirms, with regard to this virtue, the principles of the *law of nature*. The second table of the decalogue is wholly referrible to this branch of duty, and the precepts, which it delivers, are extended and inculcated in a variety of places in the Old Testament.

The new code is not less particular and express on this subject. Our Saviour requires that we should not confine ourselves to the *letter of duty*, but that we should act according to its spirit, by maintaining the greatest delicacy of conscience, and by cherishing such a sense
of

of *probity*, as excludes the most distant idea of *injuring* our neighbour, and even leads us rather to relinquish our strict right, than to carry it to extreme rigour. On this subject, he has delivered a rule remarkable for its sententious conciseness, and easily retained by memory—a rule extremely comprehensive, and of the most ready application—a rule which a Roman Emperor had inscribed on his palaces, in letters of gold.* This rule is; *All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so unto them. For, this is the law, and the prophets.*†

This precept it is, however, necessary to understand according to the limitations suggested by Reason, and the very nature of the case. We are not required to take our own unreasonable desires and propensities

* *Ælii Lampridii Alexander Severus*, c. 51. apud *Historiæ Augustæ Scriptores*.

† Matt. viii. 12.

sities as our rule of action towards others, on the supposition of our being in their situation. We are not required to judge according to the dictates of *passion*, or *self-interest*, which always obscure the *understanding*, and pervert the *heart*. We are not to consider what these would dictate, to us, in such situations, or circumstances. We are to attend to what impartial and unprejudiced Reason dictates, and, at the moment of judgment, or of action, to divest ourselves of the bias of *self-love*. In every case, our partialities and selfish propensities prevent our judging and acting uprightly. These we are to lay aside by *supposing that we are the person towards whom we act, or of whom we judge*. We shall, then, find another view of things presented to our minds, and that the assumed character sees our *partialities* and *passions* in a light very different from that in which they appear to ourselves. We are not to divest ourselves of *reason* and *justice*. These are inherent

in

in the rational nature. But, that *reason*, and this *justice*, we are, now, to exercise in such a manner, as we should do, if we ourselves were the very persons towards whom they were to be exercised. We must not alter, or misrepresent the case. This we must examine, as it lies before us, and decide accordingly. But, the supposition, that *we ourselves are the persons in question*, will effectually check every propensity to exceed the strict bounds of *justice*, and give us a leaning to the *merciful side*. Our minds, freed from *prejudice*, and brought to impartial views, will adhere to what is just and equitable in itself. This is the proper interpretation of our Saviour's golden rule.

Nor were the Apostles less decided than their Master, in recommending the cardinal virtue of *justice*. It is needless to produce the various passages of their writings to this purpose, because the assertion, now made, cannot be denied.

Few

Few pages of the New Testament but contain some severe censures on the iniquities committed, both by Jews, and by Heathens, or strong recommendations to Christians to abstain from every species and degree of *injury, fraud, oppression, and violence.*

But, *abstinence from injury* is not yet sufficient for social happiness. It is necessary to do, to others, all the good in our power. In this consist the virtues of *compassion, of generosity, of charity, or brotherly love*; and these constitute the second, and the most amiable class of social duties.

Compassion prompts to relieve the distressed. *Generosity* dictates candour in our judgments of others, and every possible service to the public, and to individuals, within the sphere of our station, our influence, or our activity. *Charity* connects us with the whole human race, makes us assume their feelings, and their situations,

situations, and take a lively interest in their happiness, and impells us to promote it. Kindness, condescension, and mutual affection, superinduce the most amiable complexion on human intercourse, and produce all that endearing reciprocation of good offices which sweetens and adorns social life. Without these, even in the small degree in which they exist, at present, every social virtue would soon disappear, and, *charity* being banished, even *justice* itself would not remain. For, the same principle, which dictates the former, also dictates the latter, and the two *virtues* differ only in degree and extent. That species of *justice*, therefore, which originates in the fear of punishment, as it is destitute of every ingredient of virtue, would also soon burst every restraint which confines it to *external practice*.

The claims of justice must, however, be satisfied, before *charity* can be admitted to

act her part. Debts must be paid before *liberality* is practised. The indolent and idle are not to be maintained by *alms*. The *indiscriminate pardon of malefactors* would be pernicious clemency.

Neither does *charity* require us to prefer other individuals to ourselves, but only not to deprive them of that regard which is due to them, as *men*, or as *Christians*, and to do them all the good in our power, consistently with our own happiness. It is, indeed, certain that even private happiness is best promoted by cultivating *benevolence*, and that whoever separates his interest from that of his kind, destroys the strongest terrestrial supports of his own welfare. To check, and, much more, to extinguish, the best feelings of the heart is, therefore, as *im-prudent*, as it is *unnatural*.

The precepts of *morality* are absolutely necessary to counteract the operations of *pride*,

pride, avarice, revenge, ambition, and all the train of selfish passions which are so apt to possess and actuate the human heart. They are necessary also to give a right direction to the *social principles*. Even these are subject to perversion, and may easily be rendered the covers of a more refined selfishness. Men are prompted to confine their love to those with whom they are more particularly connected, whose dispositions are similar to their own, whose sentiments are congenial, or whose views, or interests, are coincident with theirs. They are equally disposed to hate those who differ from them, in all these respects. Hence, the *attachments* and *hatreds* of *sects* and *parties*. The former are merely an *extension of self-love*; the latter are an *opposition of passion*. Both are characteristical of a contracted mind. Hence also, so many *national antipathies*; so many *conspiracies, iniquitous combinations, and confederacies*; so many *wars and persecutions*, even on account of

Religion, by which they ought to be restrained. All these are directly repugnant to the *law of nature itself*.

It was, therefore, extremely necessary that *divine Revelation* should restore, to that *law*, its original force, should enlarge its extent, and purify its constitution. It was necessary that the Religion of Jesus should teach us that nothing, interesting to humanity, ought to be indifferent to any human being; that the affection, which we bear to one part of mankind, should never inspire hatred towards others; and that we may love our relations, our friends, and our countrymen, without extinguishing that benevolence which is due to all who wear the *human face divine*, although its degrees may vary according to relations and circumstances.

The Gospel, not satisfied with enjoining the *love of our neighbour*, suggests a variety of powerful motives to the cultivation of it.

it. It lays before us our common origin, and shews the whole human race, as descended from one stock. It holds up, to us, the pattern of God himself, who assumes the appellation of *our Father*, and requires all his children to maintain the bonds of fraternal union; and, if any of mankind should not appear worthy of our affection, to view him with a favourable eye, for the sake of *our Father, who is in heaven*. It presents, to us, the example of *Jesus Christ*, invested with human flesh, who hath exhibited the most astonishing instance of love to all mankind, and who enjoins, on us, from motives of gratitude to him, and in proof of our being his disciples, to *love one another*. Numberless are the passages of the New Testament which enforce this duty from these considerations.

It was worthy of the Gospel to exalt our views far above the ordinary range of social virtue, to purify our affections, to

dignify our conduct, and to extend our benevolence infinitely beyond the sphere to which it is limited by the generality of men. In embracing, in the arms of celestial benevolence, the whole human race, without distinction of sect, of party, or of country, and even without the exclusion of enemies; in moderating anger, and suppressing hatred, revenge, and rancour; consists the essence of Christian *charity*, which, thus, becomes a virtue truly divine.

CHAPTER X.

Of Self-Government.

If we consider the human constitution as the work of God, as the whole of this Essay necessarily implies, it will be easy to perceive his design and will in the formation of it ; and, whatever these may be, it is plainly the duty of man to comply with them. The smallest attention, whether to our internal frame, or to the course of external events, must convince us that our *desires* and *passions* ought to be subjected to *Reason* and *Conscience* ; and that these *desires* and *passions* have been im-

parted to us, not to domineer in the mind, but to serve merely as incentives to action, under the direction of *Reason*, and of the *Sense of right and wrong* which is implanted in our hearts. These last are the *sovereign* and *ruling principles*. The former are the *subjects*, which must obey, and execute; and, as a sovereign, without subjects, would be feeble and ridiculous; so, subjects, without a directing power, would waste their strength and energy in disjointed and unavailing efforts. When our *desires* and *passions*, therefore, are indulged without controul, they introduce the wildest disorder and confusion into the mental frame, and, frustrating their own ends, instead of that pleasure and enjoyment which they pursue, produce distress, disappointment, and misery. By usurping the authority of the *higher principles* of our nature, they reduce them to the most abject bondage, prevent their cultivation, enlargement, and maturity, and, thus, preclude all the

higher

higher and more refined satisfactions, which these nobler principles are intended to afford. Or, to express this matter in more popular and intelligible language, I think that no person of common sense will maintain that *Reason* and *Understanding* should submit to *Passion*; *Folly* to *Wisdom*; *Ignorance* to *Knowledge*. But, this is the very thing which is effected, when our *desires* and *passions* are indulged without restraint.

That happiness is the ultimate object of all mankind is acknowledged. Hence, some Philosophers have maintained that *self-love*, well understood, is the principle of virtue. Their system is that of *expediency*, or *prudence*. This principle pervades the moral writings of Puffendorf, and has been adopted by Paley. But, in this opinion I cannot agree, because *benevolence*, or the love of others, is as much a principle of our constitution, as *self-love*; and *benevolence*, whenever it is rendered subservient

subservient to *self-love*, loses its nature, and its object. These two principles are, therefore, to be considered as equally natural to man, only with this difference, that, viewing ourselves as parts of the human species, and as sent, into the world, by the Deity, to occupy the place which he has assigned us, as members of his great family, and to fulfil the duties attached to this relation; whenever *self-love* interferes with *benevolence*, as embracing the universal good, we must perceive that it is the will of our Creator that it must give place to this more enlarged principle, and sacrifice individual interest to that of the grand community. As soon as we consider ourselves as the creatures of God, and as capable of discovering his attributes, we find ourselves in a situation different from that in which we are placed by our own immediate feelings; and we behold a nobler and more comprehensive sphere of action disclosed to our view.

It is true that it may still be, and has been frequently, asserted, that the interest of each individual is so closely connected with that of the whole, that, in whatever tends to promote the good of the latter, that of the former is, every thing considered, also comprehended. This will be readily granted ; yet, it is not so easily discernible, and a long induction of particulars, of which the generality of mankind are incapable, is necessary to establish the position. Men generally distinguish between *public* and *private* good, and the distinction is founded in nature. We have certain *affections* and *passions*, which centre in ourselves, and our near connexions. We have others, which are directed towards a community. These constitute two distinct classes, which are respectively referrible to the two principles of *benevolence* and *self-love*. In the due indulgence of these classes of affections, together with those which have the

Deity

Deity for their object, the happiness of man is certainly placed.

Besides; the nobility of *virtue* seems to be tarnished and degraded by coolly and systematically referring all her more generous energies to the mercantile calculations of *self-love*. I am apt to think, though I wish not to be uncharitable, that *prudential* moralists, however composed and regular their conduct may have been, have never experienced the tender sympathies of our nature, the yearnings of affection, or the glow of elevated sentiment. This, I think, I could prove by their writings. Of one thing I am certain—that the great interests of mankind have not been promoted by these *prudential systems of morality*. They have a tendency to superinduce a cold, phlegmatic, arithmetical, *moral* habit. How little such principles are founded in reason, none has more ably shewn than Cicero, in his

his Book *De Officiis*, when discussing the *utile* and the *honestum*.

Although *self-love* cannot be justly considered as the *principle* of *virtue*, it may certainly be adopted, as the source of those duties which we owe to ourselves. These duties consist in the just regulation of *self-love*, in the right estimation of pleasures and pains, in the pursuit of the former, and in the evitiation of the latter, according to their proper value. It is, however, to be observed that, so close is the connexion of all the branches of human duty, that the observance or violation of any one of them affects all the others.

Hence, it is evidently a dictate of *prudence* to enjoy the pleasures of sense with moderation, to circumscribe our wants within natural bounds, and to allow due exercise and employment to our faculties, since, with this exercise and employment,

ment, nature has connected our preservation, the supply of our necessities, and almost every enjoyment of life. For the same reason, *indolence* and *ignorance* are real defects, because they render us incapable of that correct conduct which is necessary both for *public* and for *private* good. In fine, experience shews us that *gluttony*, *epicurism*, *drunkenness*, *lust*, *anger*, *ambition*, *avarice*, and *revenge*, are productive of still greater evils. Hence, not only these excesses, but even every violence of passion, and every kind of dissoluteness, were condemned by Epicurus himself, as pernicious to man, and attended by remorse and shame.

But, besides this government and economy of our passions, and of our enjoyments, which were the objects of Epicurus' philosophy, other Philosophers, and, particularly, the Stoics, deduced the rules of *temperance* and *self-command* from higher principles, namely, *the dignity of human nature*,

nature, and *a desire of perfection*, which require that man, endued with reason, should abstain from many pleasures originating solely in the animal part of his constitution. Those sages refused the name of *good* to every thing, but the knowledge of *truth*, and the practice of *virtue*; and regarded man as a pure *intelligence*.

If those Heathens, who were capable of such elevation of sentiment, carried it to extravagance, as they certainly did, they are entitled to excuse, and even to some degree of admiration. They put to shame those groveling Christians, who limit human happiness to the most sordid acquisitions, or to sensual delights. There is, however, a middle point, in regard to this subject, which true wisdom only can discover, and true virtue maintain. A moral system, adapted to the real state of man, and both pure and practicable, is what the human species requires.

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The Heathens never rightly apprehended the true state of human nature. They understood neither its original dignity, nor its enfeebled and corrupt condition by the introduction of sin. They were still greater strangers to its renovation by divine grace. Hence, while one sect was licentiously *lax*, another was impracticably *rigid*.

The Gospel, unfolding to us our real constitution and circumstances, fixes the proper limits which these prescribe. Man's original nature, his destination, his infirmity, his fall, his misery, his necessity of restoration by supernatural intervention, all which are unfolded by Revelation—these lead us to the right estimation of his real interest, and to those rules of duty which are subservient to its advancement.

1st; From this source flows, in the first place, the preliminary duty of *humility*, which,

which, though it be seldom mentioned by Heathen writers, constitutes the basis of Christian *self-government*. In this habit of mind, there is no tincture of real meanness, such as the Epicurean, and Cynic, systems inspired, though in opposite directions, while they both degraded human nature. Christian *humility*, on the contrary, exalts it, by instilling a proper sense of our dependence, of our depravity, and of our insignificance, in the presence of God, and by supporting us, at the same time, by confidence in the Deity's goodness, through whose grace we are enabled to rise above the corruption of our nature, and to aspire to whatever is generous and exalted. Christian *humility* is compounded of *modesty* and *gratitude*; of *distrust of our own merits*, of *regard for others*, and of *submission to infinite perfection*, which it apprehends, adores, and loves. This is the lesson which Christ designed to teach, when, taking little children in his arms, he said that his followers must resemble

them, in order to enjoy the kingdom of heaven; that is, they must possess their *simplicity* and *candour*; they must relinquish all *self-conceit*, all *vain glory*, and every idea of their *own sufficiency*,* and *greatness*. This virtue requires us not to abjure every becoming sentiment, and to grovel in the dust. It strips us only of that *pride*, which is ridiculous, and, consequently, degrading, and must, in the sight of God, be abominable, because it implies an assumption of all that is incompatible not only with the nature of man, but with that of any created being, nay, must be unknown to supreme perfection itself. It is an assumption of what belongs not to any rational principle, and always rises in proportion to the *ignorance* and *selfishness* of the being in whom it resides. It is, therefore, at bottom, real and intrinsic meanness. But, *Christian humility*, which is an exalted and dignified habit of soul,

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* Matt. xi. 29.

leads us to find, in God, what we want in ourselves. For, in the language of Scripture, *God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.**

That *pride*, which so easily and so generally swells in the human heart, proceeds either from external possessions, in which *greatness* is falsely supposed to consist; or from a comparison which we make, between ourselves and others, in our own favour, which is the result both of ignorance and of selfishness; or from a want of a due sense of dependence on our Creator, which betrays shameful ignorance, and intolerable arrogance. All these errors and vices are rectified by that *piety*, whence Christian *humility* proceeds.

The Gospel reminds us of our *natural equality*, and of our dependence on our common Father, and inspires sentiments

* James iv. 6.

of kindness and condescension towards all our brethren of the human race. But, the most powerful restraint upon *pride*, which it employs, and which was unknown to the Heathens, is that of placing us continually before our Creator, to whom we owe our existence, our comforts, and our salvation. It places us also before his tribunal, as our Judge, in whose presence we are all guilty, and whose mercy we all equally need, and must implore. The evangelical language of dependence, of conscious guilt, and of supplication for pardon, enters into all our devotional exercises, and is not only adapted to cure us of that gross and ridiculous *vanity*, which results from superiority of fortune ; but also tends to prevent, or subdue, that more refined species of vanity, or haughtiness, which consists in that secret complacency and esteem, which a person entertains for himself, on account of his talents, his virtue, or his devotion—and which may be considered as the most dangerous species
of

of pride, because it is invested with an appearance of real dignity of sentiment. The various ways, in which our Saviour unmasks the Pharisees and Sadducees, who may be considered as the representatives of false Devotees, and false Philosophers, in all ages, convey a striking lesson to all who value themselves on their piety, or on their talents, knowledge, and science; and teach us that *modesty* is the highest ornament of mental acquirements, and that *humility* is the most distinguished feature of religion.

The peculiar manner in which *humility* is inculcated, the just and elevated conception of it, expressed in the New Testament, and the appropriate motives, by which it is enforced, distinguish the *Christian scheme* of morals from every other, and evince, in my opinion, the divinity of its origin.

2dly; Pagan morality was not so entirely defective on the subject of *temperance*, as on that of *humility*. On *temperance* the Heathen Moralists have delivered some admirable instructions, not, however, without the alloy of false or licentious opinions, proceeding, partly, from their own erroneous views of human nature; partly, from a culpable compliance with vicious customs. Christian morality, observing a just mean, between *laxity* and *rigour*, points out that plan of a well regulated life, which is the most conducive to the happiness of the individual, to domestic comfort, and to social order and prosperity.

Temperance ought to embrace the chief objects of our passions. These are *wealth*, *honour*, *power*, and *pleasure*. On each of these I shall make some short observations.

1st; With regard to worldly possessions, Christianity does not exhort, as did certain Heathen Moralists,

Vel nos in mare proximum
Gemmas et lapides, aurum et inutile
Summi materiam mali
Mittamus. —— HOR. Carm. lib. iii. c. 24.*

Nor does it command us to make a vow of perpetual poverty, as some of its ignorant and enthusiastic votaries have done, and still do, under the influence of corrupted religion. It enjoins only to moderate our desire of riches; to use them, when possessed, with temperance and discretion; to apply them to their proper purposes; not to repine, if we want them; and to direct our views chiefly to an everlasting inheritance beyond the grave. It is needless to quote the many passages of

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* O ! let us consecrate to Jove,
Our gems, our gold, pernicious store,
Or plunge into the deep the baleful ore.

the New Testament which inculcate this just and salutary doctrine. One or two instances may suffice.*

Seneca has written more, and better, on the abuse of riches, than any of the ancient Philosophers. But, he has said nothing so just, energetic, and beautiful, on the insatiable desire of wealth, or the proper use of worldly possessions, as the following passages of Paul, the Apostle! *Godliness, with contentment, is great gain. For, we brought nothing with us into this world, and, it is certain, can carry nothing out. And, having food and raiment, let us therewith be content. For, they that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For, the love of money is the root of all evil, which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with*

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* Matt. vii. 19, 20, 21.—Luke xii. 15. &c

many sorrows. Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.†*

2dly; Another disease of the soul, which requires a remedy, is the inordinate desire of *worldly grandeur, dignity, power, and fame*. The Christian religion, indeed, commands us to respect those who are invested with offices of power, which are necessary for the order of civil society. It recommends, to us, neither to decline such offices, when we are lawfully called to them, nor to pursue them with too eager ambition, nor to regret the want of them. They are to be regarded, as a painful

* 1 Tim. vi. 6. and following. † 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18, 19.

painful charge, instituted for the public benefit, to which solemn obligations are attached; not as objects of emolument, or of vanity, and ostentation. Although Philosophers have delivered many judicious instructions, with regard to the folly and pernicious effects of *ambition*; yet, they penetrate not to the root of the evil, namely, *a too high opinion of ourselves*, and, in order to divert men from the intemperate pursuit of *power*, and *external distinction*, have merely exhibited striking pictures of the care, anxiety, disappointment, and mortification, which attend them. The Gospel begins by inspiring us with an humble opinion of ourselves, and, then, without suppressing that *natural desire* of respect, which has been implanted as a spring of improvement, and of virtuous action, it presents, to this desire, an object commensurate to our nobler faculties, and completely worthy of our pursuit. It requires us to *seek the praise*

praise of God more than the praise of men. It assures us that God will render, to them, who, by a patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, eternal life.†*

This Christian ambition, not only throws no impediment in the way of that truly honourable distinction, which may be procured even in this world—the distinction of talents, of knowledge, and of virtue, but even qualifies us still more for attaining it. This species of ambition evinces, at least, that real *merit* to which only real honour is justly due. If distinction cannot be procured in consistence with *virtue*, the doctrine of Christ teaches us to despise, and to renounce that honour, which is real degradation.

The object of Christian *ambition* is substantial, and solid; grand, and unchangeable.

* John xii. 43.

† Rom. ii. 7.

able. It is not obtained by the disappointment of others. Every one may aspire to immortal happiness and glory, in a future world, and in this, to the distinction of virtue, and to the favour of God. In these pursuits, the best means of success are our endeavours for the benefit of mankind.

From this view of the objects of pursuit, presented by Christianity, results a double effect of the most salutary nature. That low species of *ambition*, which agitates and corrupts the heart, is mortified and subdued. On the other hand, objects, adapted to rouse and ennable our exertions, are presented to the mind. This is exactly what our nature requires, namely, to have its active powers properly directed, and continually occupied, by pursuits, dignified, legitimate, and interminable.

Between

Between the solicitude and trouble of ambition and avarice, and *Epicurean* or *Stoical indifference*, our religion prescribes a just medium. On the one hand, our Saviour, requiring us to set bounds to our cares, exhorts us *to take no thought for tomorrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself; sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.** This exhortation implies that we ought to limit our schemes; that we should not pretend, as foolish and vain men often do, to regulate events, to dispose of futurity, or even to depend, with certainty, on a single day.† The daily experience of life bears testimony

* Matt. vi. 34.

+ Never, perhaps, was this horrid arrogance carried to such a pitch, as by the fallen Emperor of France. He pretended to chain fortune to his chariot-wheels, to command *fate*, (as was his jargon,) and to regulate events. In a word, he dared to use the blasphemous language which arrogated, to himself, the attributes of **Deity**.— His prostituted flatterers re-echoed his words, and *served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for*

mony to the solidity of this principle. Hence, we ought to cultivate contentment and resignation, and to act with judgment and prudence, according to our ability. Thus disposed and impressed, we may enjoy serenity and composure of mind, satisfied that our task is performed, and that all events are under the direction of *infinite wisdom* and *goodness* which, in ways frequently concealed from our view, will conduct them all to the most happy

*ever.** Where is he now? *I sought him, but he could not be found!*† Let those, who have overturned him, and possess the power from which he has been driven, beware of imitating his daring presumption. Let them beware, not only of blaspheming, by words, but of insulting, God, by their actions. For, whoever presumptuously violates the divine laws, and endeavours to counteract the beneficent ends of his government, by oppression, violence, and tyranny, is a *practical Atheist.*—

Discite justitiam moniti, et non temnere Divum.‡

VIRG. ÆN. vi. v. 620.

This Note was written when I was revising this Essay for the Press.

* Rom. v. 25. † Psalm. xxxvii. 36.

‡ Warn'd, justice learn, and God not to despise.

happy result. This just temperament of *prudence* and *industry*, always subordinate to the superior views of Providence, and supported and encouraged by enlightened and implicit confidence in God, seems to be one of the chief attainments of Christian wisdom.

On the other hand, Christianity, so far from authorizing *indolence* and *inactivity*, or permitting frivolous pursuits, addresses, to us, a multitude of lessons on this subject, and prompts to becoming exertion, by a variety of cogent motives. It would be easy to produce many passages to this purpose. But, brevity must, now, be consulted.*

With respect to external decorations, as they relate to our persons, our houses, or our general appearance in the world, the Gospel pretends not to enter into any

* See 1 Thess. iv. 10, 11.—2 Thess. iii. 10, 11, 12.

any specific detail, viewing these points as indifferent, in themselves, and as subject to variations, according to times, situations, and circumstances. It merely lays down those general principles, which, with regard to matters of this kind, ought always to direct us. It inspires contempt for empty shew and parade, and recommends simplicity, modesty, and moderation, as peculiarly becoming the professors of the religion of Jesus. On this subject I must again refer to the passages of Scripture, quoted at the bottom of the page.*

Most other religions have made matters of conscience of points perfectly indifferent in their own nature. This is not the spirit of Christianity. The temperance, moderation, and frugality, which it requires and dictates, consist not in any ascetic or monkish practices, or in any frivolous

* 1 Pet. iii. 1, 2, 3, 4.—1 Tim. ii. 9, 10.

frivolous observances whatever. It is lawful for a Christian, who understands, and has imbibed the evangelical doctrine, (*evangelical*, in the true sense of the term,) to eat of every kind of food, and to drink, of every kind of liquor, not injurious to his health, at all times, and on all occasions, provided he eat and drink with sobriety, and always acknowledge that, from God, he receives his daily subsistence.* In truth, the precepts of the Gospel will be found, in this, as in every other respect, to be consonant to the purest and most enlarged principles of Reason.

The more Christianity, as it exists in the New Testament, is studied, the purer, and the more adapted to improve and exalt human nature, it will be found to be. It is to be regretted that, even in Protestant Churches themselves, its simplicity, energy, and celestial power, have

* Eph. v. 18.—Rom. xiv. 14.—1 Tim. iv. 4.

been impaired by human additions and mixtures, with a view to improvement. *Divine wisdom* will not incorporate with *human device*.

3dly; *Chastity* is one of those points of *self-government* which exhibits, in a striking manner, the just, the correct, and salutary nature of *Gospel-morality*. Even the best and wisest of the Heathens were, with regard to this article, hurried into excesses which excite horror and indignation in the breast of every person, bearing the Christian name, who is not branded with the blackest mark of turpitude. While this was the case with the Heathens, unenlightened by the rays of celestial truth, many teachers, even in the Apostolic times, as is evident from the first Epistle to Timothy, and from that to the Colossians, enjoined the most rigid and unnatural observances, exalting celibacy, condemning second marriages, imposing bodily macerations, and requiring

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men to devote themselves to a recluse and eremitical life. To what excess and extravagance these notions were carried, in succeeding times, is well known; and the same absurdity still exists in Popish countries.

'This is not, however, conformable either to the precepts, or to the spirit, of Christianity. It points out, to each individual, a station in the world, and requires him to fulfil its duties, by contracting those relations which humanity prescribes, but, at the same time, to carry, along with him, into these, their becoming dispositions, the feeling of their obligations, and the genuine spirit of enlightened and rational piety. *Marriage is honourable in all*, says the Apostle, *but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.** This is the substance of Christian morality on this subject.

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* Heb. xiii. 4.

The more amiable and necessary the conjugal relation is, the more our Saviour's doctrine tends to maintain it, in all its purity, not only by condemning those *pollutions* and *abominations*, of which the Epistle to the Romans exhibits a shocking picture, and which are subversive of the very ends of marriage; and *adultery*, which contaminates and breaks this sacred tie; but even by restraining the facility of *divorce*, which imprudently dissolves it, and by prohibiting *polygamy*, by which it is enfeebled and deformed. In the opinion of the ablest Lawyers and Civilians, the Christian Rule is, in this respect, the wisest, and the most salutary. *It must be allowed*, says Puffendorf, in his *Law of Nature and Nations*, that the *justest and the most salutary rule, and the best adapted to maintain domestic peace, is, that every man have but one wife, at a time; and that obligation, which equally binds the husband and the wife to fidelity, is with-*

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*out controversy, the noblest and most perfect.**

It has been maintained that, in certain situations and climates, *polygamy*, or a plurality of wives, may be permitted. Whatever truth there may be in such opinions, it must be granted that, *on the whole*, it is a pernicious institution. Even in cases where it may be held to be admissible, the *deterioration of domestic society* sufficiently proves it to be, at best, an evil of no ordinary magnitude. A preference of one wife to another will inevitably take place, and, from this, jealousies, hatreds, and strifes, must ensue. *Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah,*† is a representation perfectly natural, and such as must always happen in a state of *polygamy*.

The Christian system also condemns *concubinage*, and sexual intercourse, unless

* Lib. vii. c. 1. § 19.

† Gen. xxix. 30.

in the married state. These were, indeed, tolerated among the Heathens ; but, they are frequently productive of fatal consequences, and are particularly incompatible with the profession of Christians whom God hath called to a state of purity and moral improvement. Not only is *chastity* incumbent, with regard to conduct. It must dwell in the heart, and regulate discourse. Indeed, if it is not seated in the heart, it will soon lose its influence on conduct, and gradually be exchanged for the lowest sensuality. To a person of any delicacy, and refinement of *moral taste*, nothing can be more disgusting than *obscenity*. It betrays a mind totally insensible, not only to every correct moral sentiment, but even to the decencies of life. Even the indulgence which the libidinous appetite pursues, shuns disclosure, and desires to assume that veil which conceals its inferior character. Nay, many of the brute creation fly to concealment in such enjoyments,

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and seem to confess that obscurity, not glaring day, is their peculiar sphere. The person, then, whose conversation is polluted by *obscenity*, descends even below the instinctive *modesty* of a brute, and evinces that he has no conception either of human dignity, or of natural decorum. But, it is peculiar to debauchery to suppress all the more delicate and refined feelings, to enfeeble and degrade the mind, and to plunge it in the sink of appetite merely animal.

In order to feel the full force of the Christian precepts, by which *purity* is enjoined, we have only to glance at history, or to consider what passes, every day, in the world. So many disorders are produced by *incontinence*, and so great are the evils which flow, in turbid streams, from this source, that, perhaps, no other irregular passion is more pernicious. *Incontinence* destroys the health, and mental vigour, of the individual, ruins the peace

of families, spreads confusion through society. Walk the streets of a populous city, mark the meagre, emaciated figures which you meet, the shrunk and tottering limbs that carry them, the pallid and deformed countenances which they exhibit—observe the bloom of youth withered and blasted, and immature age occupying its place.—Go into company, remark the debility of intellect, the degradation of sentiment, the base conceptions of human enjoyment, which are presented to your consideration ; attentively survey all these—you will confess that *sensual excess* is branded, on the front, with the most hideous marks of turpitude—you will confess that, when Christianity enjoins *purity* of life, of conversation, and sentiment, she consults both the dignity and the happiness of man !

Although the Gospel proscribe every species of *debauchery*, and all *profane* and *corrupting amusements*, it consigns not its professors

professors to austerity and gloom. All the sweets of domestic intercourse, all the enjoyments of rational and agreeable conversation—of innoxious mirth and pleasantry—the high delights of science, and various knowledge—the temperate use of all that can contribute to our comfort and satisfaction—moderate and exhilarating exercise; in a word, every natural and innocent recreation—all these are open to every Christian who can obtain them. His religion imparts, to them, their true relish.

Thus, Christian morality observes that proper medium which both allows every corporal indulgence requisite for the preservation and comfort of animal life, and for the continuation of our species; and, at the same time, exalts the soul to the enjoyment of those pure and sublime pleasures to which wise and good men have, in all ages, assigned the first rank. These are the pleasures of understanding, genius.

genius, and generous affection—improvement in knowledge and elegant art—the perception of order, harmony, beauty, and perfection—gratitude, mutual benevolence, virtue, magnanimity—peace of conscience, the joyous assurance of the divine favour and protection; and the admiration, confidence, and hope, which are inspired by the contemplation of the works of Deity, by the express dictates of Revelation, and by the prospect of a blessed immortality. These are inexhaustible sources of pure and refined delight, and these, without excluding the pleasures of sense, are recommended and presented, to us, by our holy Religion. What philosophy was ever directed to such glorious objects, was capable of ascertaining them, or so effectually provided the means of their attainment?

'This wise and salutary moderation of Christian morality merits particular attention, as characteristical of the system to which

which it belongs. The general propensity of mankind leans towards *ambition*, *avarice*, and *sensuality*. On the other hand, certain men have, in every age, pretended to be the censors and correctors of others, whose animadversions have, however, been mere declamation, and whose love of rectitude has proved *misanthropy*. Such have, with a view to perfection, invented, as has been stated above, the most absurd rules of rigid discipline, and imposed, on mankind, severities which, though they tortured their bodies, had no effect to improve their minds, nay, often strongly tended to corrupt them. Such were many Philosophers of the Pythagorean and Alexandrian schools; or the later Platonics. Such were those Ascetics who endeavoured to graft these austerities on the stock of the Christian scheme. But, nothing of this kind is to be found in the precepts of Christ, and of his Apostles. These restrain licentiousness, without countenancing austerity,

terity, and command all that is really *obligatory*, without encouraging superstitious or useless observances.

Can such precision and accuracy be ascribed to a source merely human? So prone is the mind of man to run to extremes, and so seldom does it adhere to simple truth, and right, that, wherever we find that just medium in which the enlightened understanding can always acquiesce, we may almost regard this circumstance as a proof of *divine instruction*. It resembles that admirable balance in the natural world, in consequence of which excess, on one side, is counterpoised by the reaction of another, till the just proportion is re-established through the whole; whence we infer the divine agency and direction.

It might, however, be proper to obviate some objections which have been made to certain precepts, delivered in the New Testament,

'Testament, which seem to be characterized by excessive severity. But, as I am circumscribed by the limits which such an Essay ought to observe, it may be sufficient merely to state that these precepts are to be limited to particular times and circumstances, or are merely expressed in that strong *positive* manner which must necessarily imply a *relative* and *comparative* sense.

Of this kind are such sentences as these :—*Take no thought for the morrow; for, the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.* Whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.† If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters,*
yea,

* Matt. vi. 34.

† Matt. v. 39, 40, 41.

*yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.** It is very evident that these declarations, *positively* expressed, are to be understood with certain limitations, dictated by the reason of things, or by the peculiarity of situations. The vivacity of Scripture language, and the boldness of its figures, which must always be interpreted by sound criticism, evince a degree of sentiment, and of celestial elevation of soul, totally repugnant to that cold, phlegmatic, and selfish habit of mind which characterizes a certain class of pretended Christians.

I hasten, now, to that branch of self-government which controuls and moderates *fear*, and comes under the category of *fortitude*. This embraces those habits of soul which regard evils, either apprehended, or endured.

Athly;

* Luke xiv. 26.

4thly; Christian *Fortitude* pretends not to consider external sufferings, as matters of mere indifference, as was inculcated by the Stoical philosophy, but allots, to them, their due import, acknowledges them to be *real distresses* to a being endued, as man is, with a corporal frame, and prepares the mind for avoiding or repelling them, by every legitimate means. She views them with firmness and composure, allows them their due weight, but is not disconcerted by their approach, nor agitated by the terrors of cowardly imagination. She can survey them with calmness, and deliberately take those measures which are most adapted to repel them. If they assail, in spite of every precaution, the true Christian is free from that ostentatious courage, and that Stoical pride, which pretend to brave pain, and to view misfortune with contempt. He divests not himself of humanity, and is interested by whatever affects human nature. But, his sufferings neither induce him to mur-

mur against God, nor sour his temper, nor shake his resolution. Disengaged from the world, he supports, with composure, the privation of what he considers as merely adventitious to his real happiness, and places his chief concern in his eternal state. His equanimity arises from his being taught, in the Gospel, to view the evils of life, not only as appointed in the order of nature, but, as trials ordained, by Providence, to detach him from this world, to exercise his piety, and to lead him to perfection by the road which his Saviour trode before him.

As nothing tends more to inspire courage than noble examples of this virtue, the Gospel, while it suggests every consideration that can recommend patience and resignation, sets also, before us, the examples of Christ, and of his Apostles, who practised them in the most eminent degree. When we behold them uniformly resigned to the divine will, saying,

saying, to God, *thy will be done*, placing, in the one scale, their present afflictions, and, in the other, the grace which they received, and *the joy that was set before them,** we are soothed, comforted, fortified. The agonies of death itself cannot overwhelm the man who believes that, *if he die in the Lord, he will also rise, as he rose;†* and that, *if he has suffered with him, he shall also, with him, be glorified.‡* Wherefore, says St. Peter, *let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him, in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.§*

It may, now, be proper to say a few words on the *irascible* part of our constitution, which is so apt to exceed, that, by way of distinction, this excess has obtained the name of *passion.*

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5thly;

* Heb. xii. 2. † Rev. xiv. 13.—Col. iii. 1.

‡ Rom. viii. 17. § 1 Pet. iv. 19.

5thly ; The *irascible* passions have been implanted as safeguards against *oppression, insult, and unlawful encroachment*. If we had no sense of such injustice, felt no indignation against those who offered it, and were not prompted to exert ourselves to repel, or to obtain reparation for injuries, we should be at the mercy of every ruffian, or, at least, be exposed to the assaults of the violent and unprincipled. These are checked by resistance, and intimidated by punishment. The peace and security of society are preserved, when those, who are disposed to assault the *person, the property, or the reputation*, of any of their neighbours, find that they can make no such attempt without exciting those *irascible* passions which impel to resistance, and to penal infliction. There is also a generous *indignation*, apt to rise in the mind, on beholding any remarkable instance of baseness and turpitude, which prompts to stigmatize the person by whom this has been exhibited, and, if it be

be in our power, to punish it. For, perhaps, next to the pleasure of *positive beneficence*, we may place the satisfaction of frustrating and restraining *malice, fraud,* and *treachery*, which frustration, or restraint, is only *beneficence* under another form.

Thus, the safety of the individual, and of society, is the object of the *irascible* passions, which have been implanted in our breasts, not as the sources of *direct enjoyment*, but as the means of preserving our rights, and of defending our happiness. Whenever the proper object of these passions is forgotten, they become the causes of great misery to ourselves, and throw society into confusion. It may be proper to remark, as a proof of these feelings of *resentment* being bestowed merely as safeguards, that, whereas the benevolent affections are all calculated to produce corresponding *sympathies* in the minds of others, the *angry* feelings are

repulsive. We easily participate in another's *affliction*, or in his generous glow of *magnanimity*, or *kindness*; but, we hardly ever participate his *passion*. We either make it a subject of ridicule, or view it with aversion. When *resentment* degenerates into *revenge*, it becomes one of the most absurd and odious passions of the human mind. *Revenge* seeks to inflict *pain*, without regard to *defence*, or *reparation of injury*. It disappoints, thus, the very objects of *resentment*, and is, therefore, *absurd*. It carries its inflictions greatly beyond the extent of the injury received; it acts often on grounds merely imaginary; and it stimulates to deeds of the blackest die. It is, therefore, odious and abominable.

The doctrine of Revelation is, with regard to this point, characterized by the same just temperature which it exhibits in every other branch of self-government. Its voice is to this purpose.—*He that is*

soon

soon angry, dealeth foolishly. The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression.† He, that is slow to anger, is better than the mighty; and he, that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city.‡ I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment.§ Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for, he maketh his sun to rise on the evil, and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust.|| Be angry, and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath.¶ Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from among you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another,*

z 3

tender-

* Prov. xiv. 7. † Prov. xix. 11. ‡ Prov. xvi. 32.

§ Matt. v. 22. || Matt. v. 44, 45.

¶ Eph. iv. 26.

tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you. Dearly beloved! avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for, it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.† To these many other passages of the same import might be added. But, these shall suffice.*

It is astonishing to see how human corruption and baseness find disguises and cloaks, even in the sacred Oracles themselves. The vindictive spirit often covers itself with the sacred garb of Religion. The *odium Theologicum* is proverbial, not to the honour of the clerical character. On the other hand, there is a *meanness* and *pusillanimity*, which assume the appearance of Christian *meekness*, in submitting to indignity and contempt, when self-interest dictates the submission. Few men can bear the character of a coward.

But,

* Eph. iv. 31, 32.

† Rom. xii. 19.

But, this is the real designation of many *meek* and *humble* persons. This they evince by one certain feature of cowardice—*revenge*—when an opportunity offers, and by a total oblivion of favours received in their submissive state. The true Christian *resents*, when *resentment* is necessary for protection, defence, or real dignity—is ever ready to forgive—and abominates *revenge*, the vilest and worst of passions.

Thus, *evangelical morality*, comprehending all that the soundest moral philosophy has ever delivered, with respect to the enjoyments, and the evils of life, superadds, to its precepts, other superior considerations, which enforce them, purify sentiment, refine affection, exalt pursuit, and perfectly reconcile temporal satisfactions with the more elevated and extensive prospects of religion. In this school, man acquires a certain taste and temper which must be extremely salutary,

even although his aims extended not beyond this terrestrial scene. But, this taste, this temper, this character, and the conduct which they inspire, are the most adapted to train and educate him for that life which he is intended to lead in heaven, as the reward of his virtue upon earth !

Even the practical inferences, relative to the different branches of human duty, are a striking proof of divine *wisdom* and *goodness*. They state and illustrate those obligations, whose fulfilment exhibits *moral excellence*, and, consequently, the perfection of human felicity, both *individual*, and *social*. These obligations are sanctioned by the *Deity*, as the means of ensuring the welfare of his moral subjects in this lower world. Whether, therefore, we consider the *speculative* proofs of the attributes of God, or the *moral* inferences to be deduced from them, we may observe the almighty and gracious

gracious Parent of the human race conducting his government, from the creation of man, to his final destination, in such a manner as to lead to the highest felicity of which man is susceptible.

CHAPTER XI.

Conclusion of the whole.

THE existence of a Being, all-powerful, wise, and good, by whom every thing exists, has been established in this Essay. The difficulties, regarding the Wisdom and Goodness of the Deity, have been obviated, first, from considerations independent of Revelation; and, secondly, from the views presented by the Revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ, which acknowledges the divine authority of the Old Testament. The inferences most necessary and useful to mankind have been drawn, and established. The subject proposed

proposed has, thus, been exhausted, as far, at least, as relates to the comprehension of its parts, however deficient may be the execution.

Indeed, the author of this Essay is deeply sensible of its imperfection. He is convinced that his small abilities could not do justice to a subject so grand, magnificent, splendid, and extensive. Nay, he doubts if any human talents whatever could rise to its importance and dignity. It would require the pen, not of a mortal, but of a Seraph, standing before the throne of God, glowing with his love, and directed by his inspiration ! It would require, at least, that touch of heavenly fire which was imparted, to Isaiah, by one of the Seraphims, and all the light and divine fervour which that touch produced !*

For,

* Isaiah vi. 6, 7, 8.

For, what has been the subject discussed ? The most important and sublime that can occupy the contemplation of a rational being. It has been, the existence of one Creator of the universe, possessed of infinite perfection—radiant in every attribute which is necessary, and adequate, to the production and government of universal nature ; of a Being, infinitely *powerful, wise, and good*, who superintends the works which he has produced, and uniformly directs them to the greatest happiness of the whole, and of each individual part ; who proportions this *happiness* to the powers, the capacities, and the stations, which he has allotted to all his creatures, and converts, into the sum of the highest possible *good*, even the *evil* which, from the nature of *created* and *free agents*, is unavoidable. The subject has unfolded a scheme of divine Providence, and administration, which, while it fills the mind with astonishment, and submissive adoration, also inspires it with the

most

most ardent love, and the most delightful acquiescence. It has unfolded views, which both strike and ravish the soul, and present such a series of combined events, as convey, to it, whatever can engage and occupy its intellect, and excite, and kindle and satisfy all its better feelings. What a vast scheme of Providence is disclosed to our view ! How admirably and beneficently have all its departments been conducted, from age to age ; to what a glorious result does this divine administration ultimately tend ! The inanimate and merely animal creation, in this lower world, have always observed the salutary laws imposed, on them, by their original constitution, and fulfilled the ends which the Creator had in view, in their production. Man, soon after his creation, perverted his freedom of action, and forfeited that happiness which the right use of it would have ensured. But, his omnipotent Creator, who is *love* and benignity, devised an effectual and astonishing plan,

which

which the divine mind only could conceive, for remedying the *evil*, of which the supreme happiness of man itself required the permission, for restoring him to lost felicity, and even exalting his condition, and augmenting his capacity of enjoyment. This plan extended to eternity! It was obscurely unfolded to the first human pair, to comfort them under their misery, to excite their hopes of restoration, and to encourage their penitent and virtuous efforts. This restoration was gradually disclosed as the ages advanced, in the same manner as, from the dawn of the morning, the sun acquires strength and splendour in his ascent, and, at last, darts the full blaze of meridian day! The Jewish economy, with all its rites and ceremonies, and painful observances, was intended to prepare the minds of a rude and gross people, whom God, in his inscrutable counsels, had chosen, as the depositaries of *pure Theism*, in the midst of generally prevailing

prevailing idolatry, and a total oblivion of the true Deity, to receive, in due time, the complete manifestation of pure and simple religion. It is true that a very considerable part, perhaps the majority of that nation, rejected the admirable system which was proposed, to them, by Jesus Christ, and his Apostles. It is, however, to be observed that they were the only people on earth, to whom pure and uncontaminated religion could be proposed, in the first instance, with any prospect of success. They acknowledged only *One God*, and their whole religious economy and worship were directed to him alone. To the *Theism*, inculcated by Christianity, they could have no objection, and their great error lay in supposing that a pompous ritual, perfectly adapted to the times in which it was introduced, was of perpetual obligation. It is not surprising that they should have adopted such an opinion, when we consider the obstinacy of mankind, on every subject, but, particularly,

larly, with regard to religious matters, and the tendency of the religion of the Jews to represent them as the chosen people of God. The Greeks and Romans entertained the same idea of their superiority to every other people, and every nation whatever has a strong propensity to cherish the same notion, as most individuals are prone to consider themselves as superior to the rest of their species.

Hence, when the Jews were charged, by Heathen writers, with hatred of the human race, they were not more reprehensible, in this respect, than the most polished nations of antiquity. They were chiefly abhorred by these nations, because they would not acknowledge and worship their Gods, and abjure the fundamental principle of their own religion. Can a man of sound judgment, of comprehensive mind, and unsullied integrity, admit the follies of weakness, or approve the obliquities of depravity? The

case was the same between the *Jewish* and *idolatrous* religions. The Jews were hated and despised, because they would not incorporate *error* and *delusion* with *truth* and *divine information*. In like manner, a man of sense is often hated by *fools*, and a man of integrity, by *knaves*.

Be all this as it may, the Deity preserved the knowledge of himself among this people, while it was lost among the rest of the world; and, as in every other part of his administration, adapting his government to the nature of his subjects, instituted a pompous and magnificent ritual, which was calculated to fix their attention, and to interest their feelings. As time advanced, the divine benignity, and the peculiar mode of displaying it, were more and more unfolded.* The Prophets, under the Dispensation of the Old Testament, explained both the typical nature,
and

* See Chap. 8. Book I.

and the object of the *Mosaical* institutions, and gradually led the minds of their countrymen to that great Deliverer, not only of the Jewish nation, but of those of the whole human race who should listen to his instructions, obey his precepts, and confide in his power. At last, this great Deliverer made his appearance on earth, announced his divine character and mission, preached the purest precepts of morality, unfolded, to mankind, a system of redemption from the slavery of moral corruption, and from all its baleful consequences, which no preceding sage had ever conceived ; and, in his own person, by his *sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension*, completely accomplished it. It was, perhaps, necessary that mankind should feel, and see all the horrors of *vice, superstition, and idolatry*, into which they had plunged themselves, before the Son of God appeared in human flesh, and disclosed, to them, the means of their deliverance from such a complication of aggravated and

deeply rooted evils; so that they might be convinced that nothing, short of *divine interposition*, could effect this great revolution in human affairs. Indeed, some of the Heathen Philosophers, and, in particular, Socrates, seem to have been completely convinced of this truth—that God only could either instruct mankind in every thing relating to true religion, or prescribe the remedy necessary for the mortal diseases of the mind. Christ also appeared, not only at the precise time which had been predicted, but at that which was most calculated for the reception of his doctrine, and the renovation which it was intended to produce. The polished, and a great part of the barbarous world, were then subdued under one civilized power, and the most improved and cultivated languages were generally understood. The minds of men, informed by philosophy and literature, were prepared for the reception of a purer system of religion; and, although the

strongest

strongest prejudices and interests were opposed to its introduction, to overcome which required *divine power*, still the preparation which had been made for it, in the existing state of the world, eminently evinced *divine wisdom*. At the same time, the *beneficence*, which the Christian scheme itself displays, affords the most resplendent display of *divine goodness*.

While we observe this magnificent and uniform course of supreme administration, from the creation, and the immediately subsequent fall of man, to the full expansion of the Gospel; while we carry our views forward to the complete consummation of this plan, *when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up* ;* we are compelled to admire that *wisdom, goodness, and power*, which, in

* 2 Pet. iii. 10.

the daily administration of Providence, render even the vices of men subservient to the highest attainable good, extract *virtue* from *corruption*, and make, in the language of Scripture, the *wrath of man* itself *to praise* the great Governor of the universe, and *restrain the remainder of it*.*

The entire view, presented by all the parts of the subject, which has been discussed, is the most sublime and comprehensive that can occupy the human mind. Real, rational, and enlarged *Theology* is, thus, the noblest of all sciences. It is, therefore, astonishing, that this important and exalted science should so little interest the generality of mankind. It not only affords the finest and most elevated objects of contemplation, but these are also subjects of universal interest. It regards the present happiness of man, which is the principal end of the *Moral Philosopher*;

* Psalm lxxvi. 10.

pher; but, at the same time, extends his views beyond the grave, and raises them to a sublimity of happiness, which no speculation, purely human, can pretend to explore. This is the business of *Revelation*, and of the Christian Divine, who derives his information from this pure and abundant source. The Physician's studies are limited to whatever concerns this perishing and feeble body. The Lawyer's prospects extend not beyond the verge of human governments, and human enactments, which are confined within the bounds of this terrestrial sphere. *Theology*, both *Natural* and *Revealed*, particularly the latter, embraces a compass infinitely more comprehensive. *Theology* both ascertains the real happiness of man, while he is an inhabitant of earth, and extends it into eternity! *Christian Theology* positively declares and proves this extension.

Is it not, then, astonishing, that a science, so much calculated to exercise and employ all the noblest faculties of the soul, and to satisfy all its most exalted feelings, should be so much neglected ; nay, that the generality of mankind, and, what is more, those who pretend to superior culture of mind, should deem it hardly worth their attention. Some small discovery in *Chemistry*, in *Natural History*, or in *Experimental Philosophy*, will attract the regard of all the scientific world. But, that, which it concerns man most to know, hardly excites a thought, or inspires the desire of knowledge. This is a striking proof of the frivolousness of the age in which we live. For, two hundred years ago, the case was very different. Then, *theological* subjects were held to be the most interesting of all ; and, perhaps, the violent animosities which arose, with regard to them, may have occasioned the present indifference to these speculations. Man is ever prone to run to extremes.

Even

Even among the ancient Heathen Philosophers, *Theology* was esteemed the most important, and the highest branch of science.

This was particularly the opinion of Plato, as is evident from his so frequently treating *theological subjects*. He even enjoyed the appellation of the *Divine*, or *Theologist*.

How much more must the science of Theology be exalted, when it is illumined by the *perfect day* of Christianity, beaming from the eternal source of *truth* and *wisdom*; how much more certain are its informations rendered; how much more extensive and glorious the prospects which it discloses!

When I consider the importance of the subject of this Essay, in all its bearings, relations, and results, I am apt to blame my temerity in attempting to discuss it

But,

But, the *propter amorem*,* the love of the subject, prompted me, and when the mind is much interested, the exertions of *intellect* are, sometimes, quickened and improved. If, in the course of this performance, any light has been thrown on its highly important matter, or its different branches have been unfolded in such a manner as to impress truth on the reader's mind, the author claims, to himself, no praise, on that account, but ascribes the whole to the assistance of that ever blessed Being, whose existence he has endeavoured to evince to the minds of others, whose distinguishing attributes he has attempted to illustrate, and whose Providence he has laboured to assert. To the praise of the Supreme, not to his own honour, and emolument, the author dedicates his work; and, whatever be the issue with which his exertions may be attended, he desires to acquiesce in the event,

* Lucretius, Lib. iii. v. 5.

event, rejoices that he has, at least, intended to promote, by them, the good of mankind, and entertains the cheering consciousness that, although human decision should be adverse to his success, it cannot impair his *love of Deity*, his conviction of the benignity and wisdom of his administration, or his own expectations of *glory, honour, and immortality*,* through the only means of their attainment—reliance on the merits of the Son of God, submission to his laws, and humble dependence on the aids of the Spirit of truth, of wisdom, of love, and of all virtue !

“ O Father of my Spirit ! accept of my
“ fervent thanks for having given me
“ health, energy, and patience, to conduct
“ this work to its conclusion ! I bless thee
“ that thou hast inspired me with a desire
“ of attempting, at least, what I deem to
“ be

* Rom. ii. 7.

“ be of the most important utility, the
“ eviction of thy *Being*, and *Perfections*,
“ the refutation of *Atheism* and *Irreligion*,
“ the vindication of thy *moral government*
“ of our world, and the exhibition of that
“ final termination of it, when complete
“ retribution shall obtain, when religion
“ and virtue shall be eternally rewarded,
“ and impiety and vice shall be placed in
“ that state for which only they are
“ qualified. I thank thee that thou hast
“ enabled me, at least, to conceive

—“ The height of this great argument,
“ And to assert eternal Providence,
“ And justify the ways of God to men.”*

“ To thy Name I dedicate this Work.
“ May it redound to thy glory, and to the
“ good of mankind. Whatever success it
“ may have according to human judgment,
“ may its author be enabled to say, and
“ to

* Milton's Paradise Lost, Book I. L. 24—26.

“ to feel, *the Lord hath done it!* If it suc-
“ ceed, thine be the praise.—If it fail, *thy*
“ *will be done!* To Thee be glory, and
“ honour, for ever and ever.—AMEN!”

THE END.

By the same Author,

1. AN ESSAY on the FOLLY of SCEPTICISM; the absurdity of dogmatizing on religious subjects; and the proper medium to be observed between these two extremes. *To which the Golden Medal of the Teylerian Society at Haarlem was adjudged, April 8, 1786.—2d edition.*
2. AN ESSAY on the NATURAL EQUALITY of MEN, &c. *To which a Silver Medal was adjudged by the Teylerian Society at Haarlem, April, 1792.—3d edition.*
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